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MIKE SHAYNE



MYSTERY MAGAZINE

DEC., 1974
VOL. 35, NO. 6

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

BULLETS FOR A PRIVATE EYE

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Motiveless murder? It looked that way, unless someone in the Henderson family itself was a killer. A killer who could commit fratricide without blinking, and then calmly try to burn a young girl alive. Ruthless, the murderer succeeded once, and had tried, tried again . . . When Mike Shayne entered the crazy, patchwork picture, the killer grew from deadly devious to very desperate.

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BULLETS FOR A PRIVATE EYE

by Brett Halliday

*The murder of Frank Henderson defied all logic.
No one seemed to gain, yet Mike Shayne knew
there was someone with motive enough to murder
once. And reason enough to try, try again . . .*



THE YOUNG MAN'S head was spinning. His vision was blurred because his eyes wouldn't focus no-matter how hard he tried to make them. It took a terrible effort to lift his arm even a little from the bed where he was lying.

He was in a daze. It should have been a warm and comfortable feeling and yet somehow the young man was afraid. He had to do something but he didn't know what.

The hands that lifted his head from the pillow were gentle. One hand held his head raised and the other put a glass of liquid to his lips.

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The new MIKE SHAYNE short novel



"Drink this," the soft, kindly voice said. "It's good for you. It will make you feel all right again."

The young man hesitated while the room spun about him in warm, dizzy circles and the kindly voice spoke again.

"Go ahead. Drink it all down. It will make you feel all well again."

"I don't want it," the man on the bed said. It took a terrific effort to get the four words out.

They were the last words he was ever to speak in this life.

The hands were gentle but inexorable. They held his head up and up and put the glass to his lips and tilted it so that some of the liquid spilled over into his mouth.

It was too much effort to resist any longer. He drank the whole contents of the glass.

DOCTOR COHEN was very professional and very firm when he spoke to the dead young man's mother.

"There is absolutely no doubt about it, Mrs. Henderson," he said. "I recommend that you agree to an autopsy. I know it's unsettling, of course, but the law requires one in such cases. I'm absolutely certain that it will only confirm the diagnosis I've already made. Your son Frank died of a massive overdose of sleeping pills. It's unfor-

tunate, but these things do happen—and often quite by accident."

"It would have been by accident," Roberta Henderson said. "My son Frank had no reason whatever to take his life."

"Sometimes young people don't need a real reason," Doctor Cohen said gravely. "They get depressed—brood about things."

"Not my Frank," the mother said. "He was always a cheerful and self-reliant young man. Even as a boy . . . He simply couldn't have killed himself."

"Perhaps not," the doctor agreed. "Frequently these overdoses are accidental. A person forgets how many pills he has already taken and takes more—even enough to be a fatal dose. In any case I'm sure that the autopsy will confirm my diagnosis."

"I'm sure it will, doctor," Mrs. Henderson said. Her chin quivering, she stood. "I thank you for your time. You'll excuse me, but . . . I have much to do."

Doctor Cohen watched Mrs. Henderson walk from his office. Her stride, though slow, was measured and firm. He shook his head. She was a remarkable woman. He wished she could accept the fact so clearly shown by his own examination: that her son had taken an overdose. It would be easier for her.

Mrs. Henderson was not one to take the easy way. Late that night, as she sat by her bedroom window in the big old Miami Beach home looking out over Biscayne Bay, her face was calm and resolved.

"You didn't kill yourself, Frank," she said to the empty night. "Not even by accident. I don't think you've ever even used sleeping pills. Now you are dead and I don't know why, but I'm going to find out why you died that way. No matter what any of the others say I'm going to find out why and how you died. Then you can rest in peace, Frank."

Her face was filled with a firm resolve. Quietly, she rose, closing the Bible which had been on her lap. Her grief resolved, she knew what she had to do. "To everything there is a time," she said to herself as she went up to bed, "and the time to start is early tomorrow."

Having decided on a course of action, she fell easily into an untroubled sleep.

In the morning Mrs. Henderson drove her own car across the Causeway to downtown Miami. She put the car in a parking garage which she often used on shopping trips.

This time she didn't walk to a department store.

She went two blocks south to Flagler Street and the second

floor office of private detective Michael Shayne.

She was early, and Mike Shayne's beautiful secretary and office assistant made her a cup of strong, hot coffee while they waited for the big man to come in.

It wasn't a long wait. Shayne had walked in from his old apartment hotel south of the Miami River.

He poured himself a cup of coffee and sat down behind his big desk.

"Henderson?" he said when Lucy Hamilton introduced the caller. "Mrs. Roberta Henderson? Haven't I..."

"Seen my name in the papers recently?" Mrs. Henderson finished for him. "Yes, you have. The stories were about the recent death of my youngest son, Frank. The diagnosis was an overdose of sleeping pills."

"Now I remember," Shayne said. "How can I help you, Mrs. Henderson?"

"I'll be perfectly honest with you, Mr. Shayne," she said. "I don't think Frank's death was accidental, and I am absolutely sure that it wasn't suicide. I want to hire you to find out how Frank really died. I think somebody killed him, and I want you to find out if I am right. If so, I want to know who and why."

Shayne sat back in his chair and listened gravely. From what he had read in the papers, the young man's death three days earlier had been caused by an accidental overdose. Still—he knew the lengths to which a mother's grief would go. He would hear her out. Long years of life as a private detective on the Florida Gold Coast had taught Mike Shayne never to jump to hasty conclusions.

"Does the rest of your family agree with you about this?" he asked.

"The rest of the family have no idea that I am even here to talk with you. I am doing this on my own initiative, Mr. Shayne. I have money of my own, at least enough to take care of your fees and expenses. You will be working for me alone. Make no mistake about that. I don't even want anyone else in the family told what you have been hired to do."

"Just why is that?"

"Because I am terribly afraid that if Frank really was murdered, the killer had to be someone in our own family—someone who had access to his room and a personal motive for taking action. Mr. Shayne, I don't want to let anyone—anyone in the family know what I think and what I'm doing."

"You think the killer would

try to silence you in that case?" Shayne asked.

"I hadn't really thought of it that way," Mrs. Henderson said, "although I suppose you're right. I could very well be in danger. All I meant was I didn't want to make the family all suspicious of each other until I knew for sure I was right. Also I thought it would be better if the one who did it felt perfectly safe."

"Safe and off guard," Shayne said. "That would be much better. But, if I'm working for you I'll have to be around the house. How will you explain that fact?"

"I thought of that," Mrs. Henderson said. She took a wrapped and sealed packet about the size of half a brick out of the big handbag she was carrying.

"I want you to put this in your office safe," she continued. "Inside are some very valuable jewels of my own that I've kept at the house. This morning I told the family they were missing and I was going to hire you to recover them for me; that I didn't want to tell the police, because then the Insurance Company would be notified. I told them I hoped that you could contact the thief and arrange to buy them back for me without publicity. You will be in the house to check

out the servants and their contacts. Things like that . . .”

“It may not fool a killer, if there is a killer, but I’ve had to use worse cover stories in the past. I think this one will do.”

“Thank you,” she said. “You will look into this for me then?”

“If you are sure you want me to,” Shayne said. “Of course you realize I may find out there’s nothing at all to your suspicions. I may end up by proving your son’s death was an accident and nothing more. And frankly I think that’s what I will find. I’ll only go ahead if you realize that and are sure you want me to.”

“I’m sure,” Mrs. Henderson said. “I know Frank. He never took sleeping pills and he never on God’s earth would have killed himself. He just wasn’t the boy for that. I’m sure, Mr. Shayne.”

When the formal arrangements had been made, and Mrs. Henderson had driven back to the Beach, Mike Shayne turned to his secretary.

“I honestly think that Mrs. Henderson is wasting her money, Angel,” he said. “In spite of what she says, I think it very unlikely anyone would kill her son like that. Even she hasn’t suggested a motive.”

“Finding motives is your job, Michael,” Lucy Hamilton said. “At least you can go over there



and take a look around. If there is something wrong, you’ll turn it up. Also if Mrs. Henderson is right, she may be in real danger herself. Your being there will make it a lot harder for anyone to get to her.”

“Or may give them a motive to hurry it up,” Mike Shayne said grimly. “Four suspects to check out; the two brothers and two sisters she mentioned, and

not a real motive between the lot of them."

"There's usually plenty of motive in rich families," Lucy Hamilton said succinctly.

II

THE HENDERSON PLACE was one of the old Spanish style, built facing Biscayne Bay north of the hospital complex at the Beach end of the Julia Tuttle Causeway.

It was both hidden and protected from the street by an old native stone wall about six feet high and topped by another three feet of rusty and neglected barbed wire. The wall had half tumbled down in one spot but the wire dangled above it. Back of this was a thick planting of mango and avocado, star apple, bamboo and papaya and flowering shrubs which effectively hid the place from view.

Hidden, not unprotected.

The drive was blocked by heavy old painted iron gates. When Mike Shayne drove up that afternoon, these were closed but not locked.

A dark haired, dark featured young man wearing a T-shirt and tennis shorts got up from the grass where he had been resting beside the drive. He came through the gates, closing them behind him, and walked

over to where Shayne waited in the car.

"You're the shamus?" he said.

Shayne just waited.

"Oh, come off it," the young man said. "You know, the fly cop, the shamus mother hired. I'm Peter Henderson. She must have mentioned me. She must for sure."

Mike Shayne knew who he was, of course. This was the youngest of the five Henderson children, the one his mother had described as "the sportsman, full of energy, football in college, a fisherman and a hunter, with a terrible temper."

He was looking Mike Shayne right in the eyes, and in spite of the fact that the look was hostile, the big redheaded detective felt an instinctive liking for the young man.

"Yeah, I'm Mike Shayne," he said. "Your mother hired me about a matter of some missing jewels."

"She shouldn't have," Peter Henderson said. "Anyway it wasn't about jewels. That's just for the benefit of the servants and the others."

He saw the question in the big man's eyes and continued. "Mother doesn't believe Frank's death was an accident. I heard her talking to the doctor."

"What do you think about

your brother's death?" Mike Shayne asked.

"As of right now that's none of your damn business," Peter Henderson said angrily. "Mother hired you—not me. I can tell you right now though that if I thought somebody killed Frank I'd find him myself. I wouldn't hire any fly-cop."

"Who do you think did it?" Shayne said suddenly.

Peter Henderson answered before he thought. "Any one of the family could have. Frank was the oldest wasn't he? and first in line for the Henderson fortune. We're all the same around here, shamus. If blood's thicker than water, then gold is the really solid thing."

Lots of trust among the Hendersons, Shayne thought. All he said was: "That's not what I'm here about. Suppose you just open the gates and let me on in to talk with your Mother."

Peter Henderson gave him a sardonic grin and casually complied.

As he drove to the house, Shayne estimated the estate covered at least three of four acres, fronting on the street and running all the way down to Biscayne Bay at the rear. There was a long stretch of cement sea wall and an old and rather crumbling boat dock without any boat tied up.

And behind the house was a

wide, stone-flagged patio terrace facing the water.

It was here that Mike Shayne found Roberta Henderson waiting for him. She sat in an old fashioned wicker porch chair, part of a set. On a table were glasses, bottles and an ice bucket.

"Mix yourself a drink," she said to the detective.

Mike Shayne complied. She wasn't drinking.

"Peter was having a drink," she said. "I was just talking to him. Peter is my youngest."

"So you told me this morning," Mike Shayne said. "Let's see if I have the rest of the family straight. Frank was the eldest. He was thirty one when he died. The next oldest is Sam."

"That's right," she said. "Sam's only twenty-nine, but he has the only business head in the family. Young as he is, he heads our family real estate sales and investment firm over on Lincoln Road. Next to him come my daughters Sue and Bobbie at twenty-eight and twenty-seven. Sue is engaged in a rather casual way to a nice young man in Chicago."

"And Bobbie?" Shayne prompted when she paused.

"Bobbie is chiefly engaged in being Bobbie—and, I'm afraid, in chasing after every man she meets. You'll see for yourself

when you meet her. Then of course there's Peter. He's just twenty-five and the baby of the family."

"I met him at the gate," Shayne said. "He didn't seem much like a baby to me."

Roberta Henderson laughed. "I guess not. Pete's always been our stormy petrel. Moody, stormy and intense. That's Pete. If he ever decides what he wants, nothing on earth will stop him from getting it."

Mike Shayne thought that over and wondered if even murder would stop the boy. But had there been a murder? He knew how much families hated to admit the fact of suicide.

He said: "Anyone else in the family?"

"Just Gramps," she told him. "Gramps is my late husband's father. He likes to think he's still the head of the family, and I'm afraid we cater to that whim of his outrageously. Actually the old dear is over ninety and just about senile. He lives in the past and can't remember yesterday very well." She smiled. "But I'm sure you know what I mean."

"I can guess," Shayne said.

"I hope you'll go along with our little acting in this," Roberta Henderson said. "Gramps is really an old darling. We all love him very much—and he only has a little

while longer to be with us and be pampered."

"Of course I'll respect your wishes," Mike Shayne agreed. "Anyone else who might be involved? Your daughter's fiancée? Servants? Anyone at all you can think of?"

"I'm afraid not," she said. "Sue's young man is in Chicago where his job is. He only gets down once in a while for a weekend, and he wasn't here when Frank died."

"As for the servants, there are only two. Bill Harris and his wife Dora have been with the family for forty years. They just about *are* family. As a matter of fact we can't pay them very much of anything any more, but they wouldn't think of leaving us. I don't suppose they'd know where to go or what to do if we ever closed down this house. I'd as soon mistrust myself as one of them, Mr. Shayne."

The two paused for a moment. It was a peaceful late afternoon with the westering sun sending its slanting rays towards them across Biscayne Bay. A fast motor boat full of laughing and shouting young people passed a bit off-shore and sent the waves of its passage splashing against the sea-wall.

"It doesn't look much like a scene for a murder," Roberta

Henderson said. "Oh, Mr. Shayne, how I hope that I'm all wrong about this. How very, very much I hope so—but I couldn't rest unless I had you look into it and tell me that I'm wrong."

"I hope I can do just that," Mike Shayne said. Sitting there in the afternoon sun he meant it too.

A few minutes later Mrs. Henderson had completed taking Mike Shayne on a tour of the ground floor of the house. He had been introduced to the Harrises in the kitchen as "the detective I hired. He'll be staying with us for a few days."

Shayne smiled at the elderly couple. They looked as devoted and as harmless as old servants commonly do, but the big red-head had long learned to discount appearances.

"I'll show you to your room," Roberta Henderson said and led him upstairs. The carpeting on the stairs was beautiful, but old and somewhat worn.

As they walked down the second floor hallway a door opened and a young woman who Mike Shayne spotted at once as the brunette daughter, Sue, came out.

When she saw them she said, holding out something to Roberta Henderson, "Just take a look at this, Mother."

The object she held out was a

bottle of capsules bearing the label of a nationally known drug and vitamin firm.

"That's just your vitamins, isn't it?" her Mother said.

"Yes, it's my vitamin bottle out of the medicine chest," Sue Henderson said. "The only thing is I'm not sure these are the vitamins that are supposed to be in it. The capsules look different—a little bigger than my regular ones. I just don't know—and after what happened to poor Frank ..."

"Let me see." Mrs. Henderson shook a couple of the capsules out into the palm of her hand. "These look all right to me." She offered them to Mike Shayne. "This is Mr. Shayne, dear. The detective I told you I hired about the jewels. He's an expert at these things. Maybe he can tell."

Mike Shayne couldn't tell anything at all from the look of the capsules, but when he broke one open and sniffed at the contents he got a strong bitter-almond odor which made him decide not to taste the contents.

Instead he took the bottle with the remaining capsules from the girl, brushed everything from his palm into the bottle and put in his pocket.

"I can't really tell anything just from sniffing," he told the women to put them at ease.

"But to be sure though I'd like to take these to a man I know who can analyze them."

"That would be fine," Roberta Henderson said. "You do that—and Sue, darling, maybe you should skip taking any pills at all for the next day or so."

When the girl had gone back into her room, her Mother led Mike Shayne down the hall to the corner bedroom where he would be staying.

"I've had fresh linens put on the bed," she said. "That door is to your private bath." Then she turned to the big man. "What was in that capsule Mr. Shayne?"

"I honestly can't be sure till it's tested," the detective said truthfully.

"But you did smell something that could be harmful?"

"It could be cyanide," he told her. "I'll have it tested before dinner."

"I'd be grateful if you would."

Mike Shayne put down his bag and took a turn around the room. It was big and comfortable and furnished in old fashioned style. The linens on the bed were soft and luxurious and probably had originally been Mrs. Henderson's wedding gifts—or possibly her mother's.

The big detective turned to his hostess. "You understand that I have to speak freely," he

said, "and ask you some very personal questions?"

Roberta Henderson nodded.

"All right then," Mike Shayne said, "since I smelled that capsule, which might very well be poison, I'm a good deal more inclined to think that your son's death may not be a suicide. If not, then someone is trying to kill more than one of you. First Frank and now an attempt at Sue . . . and who knows how many more are on the list."

"It's horrible," Mrs. Henderson said. Her face had gone white and tensed. "But why, Mr. Shayne? Why on earth would anyone want to kill my children? What possible enemy could they have made who would go to such lengths?"

"That is what I was going to ask you next," he said to her.

"But I don't know, Mr. Shayne. I honestly and truly don't know who could want my family dead. Our business relations haven't made enemies. I just don't know. It is like some sort of horrible nightmare. You must help me."

Mike Shayne tugged at the lobe of his left ear with the thumb and forefinger of one big hand.

"You'll have to face a couple of rather bitter facts," he said then. "In the first place the killer, if there is one, obviously

has a free run of this house. That may well rule out a business rival or anyone else outside the immediate household."

Mrs. Henderson nodded.

"Therefore, we must look for a motive inside the family itself, and the first two thoughts that present themselves to me are money and jealousy. They are the most common in family troubles."

"Oh no," Mrs. Henderson said in a low tone. "Certainly not money. My husband's estate is a trust. On my death it is divided equally among the children. No one is favored over any other. My own will is drawn on exactly the same terms."

Shayne made no comment. Fewer heirs, more for the survivors, he thought. Aloud, he said, "How about your father-in-law's money?"

"Gramps? Why that's ridiculous. He hasn't any money of his own. He turned it all over to my husband years ago—with the understanding that we

would always look after him. He now has nothing to leave."

"How about jealousy then?" Mike Shayne asked. "Could one of the children be nursing a grudge against the others?" As he spoke the dark and violent Peter was in his mind.

Again she said: "No." and she said it with conviction in her tone. "No. My children fight among themselves sometimes, like all children. That is all. To hate or kill—no!"

"There has to be a motive," Mike Shayne said. "People don't kill others just because in a family like yours. You think hard. If we can find out who has a motive, maybe we can stop this before anyone else actually gets hurt. In the meantime, I'm going to go have these capsules tested."

III

IT DIDN'T TAKE long for Mike Shayne's chemist friend at the Miami Pharmaceutical Company to analyze the pills the



redheaded detective brought in. "Definitely cyanide," he had said succinctly, handing the pills back to Shayne. "Enough to kill a dozen people with plenty to spare."

The detective thanked him, and returned to his car. Any doubts as to young Frank Henderson's murder were gone from his mind. It was fortunate Sue had been so observant—or there would have been another "suicide."

Shayne got back to the Henderson home in time to shower and change his shirt before dinner.

The family ate together in the big formal downstairs dining room. The food was excellent and was served by Dora Harris, who had done the cooking.

This was the first time Shayne had seen the whole family together. Again, Mrs. Henderson introduced him as "the detective I've asked to look into the matter of my missing jewelry. He'll be staying with us for a few days."

No one greeted the announcement with any enthusiasm. In fact young Peter Henderson positively glowered at the big redhead from his seat down the table.

Sam Henderson, who had come in just before dinner and was still wearing a dark busi-

ness suit, nodded a noncommittal greeting. Sue smiled at him, but without real enthusiasm.

The old grandfather sat at the head of the table in a big arm chair of carved mahogany with a gargoyle back. From a distance he looked as frail as a white haired old man can. His skin was almost transparent in the light of the chandelier.

Shayne noted that the old man was served with a special plate on which the meat had already been cut into pieces. He kept watching the big detective over his food, but said little or nothing to anyone. He was too far away for Shayne to get a good look at his eyes.

By contrast the younger sister, Bobbie Henderson, was close to the big man and obviously interested in getting even closer.

She was a young and shapely—and passionate—blond and she kept casting speculative glances across the table at the big redhead. Mike Shayne could recognize the sexual interest and could even be tempted to respond if he hadn't been working on a case. As it was, he had difficulty in keeping his eyes from meeting hers.

There was very little conversation during dinner. It was as if each member of the family in his or her own private way un-

derstood the true meaning of Mike Shayne's presence and was subdued by the knowledge.

The only one who didn't seem affected was the old man at the head of the table. Gramps ate lightly and carried on a continual stream of conversation with Peter Henderson who sat at his right. Shayne couldn't make out more than a word here or there. The table was too long and the old man's tones too low.

When the desert and coffee had been served however, the old man raised his voice.

"Time to leave the gentlemen to their brandy and cigars, ladies," he announced. "Of course we haven't any brandy in this house any more and you all won't let me smoke cigars—but I think it's time for man-talk for all of that."

Rather to Shayne's surprise Mrs. Henderson and her two daughters got up and left the room.

Gramps fixed Mike Shayne with his eye. "Come up to this end of the table, young man. You, too, Sam."

They complied.

"I may look like an old man," Gramps said, "but I'm still the head of this house and this family, by God. I am indeed, and it's time I took charge of the matter that has brought you here, Mr. Payne."

"Shayne," the detective started to correct the old man. Then he saw Peter Henderson. The young man gave Shayne a look that said as clearly as words: "Forget it. The old man's mind wanders, but it makes him happy to feel important."

Shayne got the message.

"I can't understand Roberta," Gramps continued. "Why she should call in a detective about a few missing jewels is beyond me. She knows I'd gladly replace the baubles for her. Always before we have taken care of our own affairs within the family. We don't need an outsider coming in here and poking around. Do you understand, Mr. Rain?"

Mike Shayne made no answer.

Peter Henderson spoke for him. "You mustn't be hard on Mr. Shayne, Gramps. He's a professional detective. It wasn't his idea to come in here. Mother hired him and it isn't up to us to interfere. I don't like the idea of his being here either, but I won't hinder him doing his job. And a private detective is better than the police."

Gramps appeared to consider the point. He drank some of his coffee. "It's a great ruckus about nothing at all," he said finally. "Roberta knows I'd buy

her more jewels anytime she wants. What are a few jewels to me. Still—if that's the way she wants it . . . all right, Mr. Crane, you can stay. Only one thing though. One thing I have to insist on. You have to understand."

"Yes?" Shayne said.

"At every step of this investigation of yours, you will answer to my grandson Peter. Peter is in charge as I would be if I was younger. We will let Roberta think she has her way, but you will answer to Peter. I don't trust the women in this family, or Sam either. Sam's more woman than man if you ask me."

Sam Henderson appeared to be having trouble holding his temper, but he managed somehow.

"I'm tired," the old man said then. "Take me up to bed, Peter. Then you can come down and take charge of Mr. Shayne's job. Take me up to bed first."

Peter Henderson said: "Yes Gramps." and helped the old man up from his chair.

The rest of the evening passed quietly enough.

When Peter Henderson came downstairs after putting his grandfather to bed he took Mike Shayne out in the yard for a smoke and a talk.

"I hope you didn't take

Gramps seriously about me being in charge of this," he said.

"I didn't," Mike Shayne said. "I was wondering what you felt about it."

"Gramps is old," Henderson said. "He's old and he forgets he doesn't give the orders around here any more. We pretty well let him say what he pleases though. You understand. It keeps him happy and doesn't really do any harm."

"I understand," Shayne said. "He seems rather fond of you."

"He is. I've always been his favorite. Maybe because I'm the wild one of this generation. Gramps was a real hell-raiser in his day, and I think he sees himself all over again in me. Not that I'm all that wild of course. I like sports and hunting. I gamble. Sometimes I go out late at night to—see the town. That sort of thing."

"Peter," Mike Shayne said, "why would anyone want to kill your family? Has some gambler got you on the hook? Have you made enemies helling around town—or had Frank?"

"Frank never helled around," Peter Henderson smiled. "I've got no enemies that would want to kill me—let alone Frank. In fact, I still don't think anyone did want to kill Frank. I think Frank took an overdose of those pills by mis-

take. It's only because of Mother that I don't order you off this place. Now what can I do for you?"

"You can show me around this place," Shayne said. "I want to see every room and what it's used for. I want to see that every ground floor door and window is secured tonight. That you can do for me."

"Yeah, we've got time," Henderson said. "We go to bed early around here. Everybody but me, anyway. I fully intend to go out tonight." He grinned.

Within the hour, the tour was completed. Shayne noted that the lower floor was secured, and, surprisingly, so were the upper floors.

After leaving Peter Henderson Shayne went to his room. He took off his coat, tie and shoes and sat down in an easy chair by the open window to think over the events of the day. He turned out the small lamp on the night table by his bed and sat quietly in the dark, thinking.

This was an odd sort of case for the big man and he went over the facts again and again in his mind. Try as he might, Shayne couldn't be sure of the motive.

The discovery of cyanide in Sue Henderson's vitamin capsules had convinced him that Frank's death had been no ac-

cident. Someone had administered the overdose of sedative.

The killer hadn't stopped there. He had set a deadly trap for Sue also. Would he stop there? Shayne was pretty sure that he wouldn't.

The lack of a clear cut and obvious motive convinced the detective that he was dealing with someone with a twisted and psychotic mind. There was a killer but no logical reason to kill—ergo, there was an illogical killer, an insane murderer.

Which one of those fine young people would be the next target? Or would it be the mother or the old grandfather? Or even Mike Shayne himself? A crazy killer doesn't stop. He goes on and on, bound only by his insane compulsions.

He would have guessed the real reason for a private detective's presence in the house of course. The simple thing for him to do would be to protect himself by striking directly at the danger. That meant to kill Mike Shayne himself. The big man would have to be on his guard every moment. He knew it.

There was a sound that set Shayne instantly alert.

Someone was tapping very gently on the door to his room.

He was out of his chair and across the room. The tapping continued.

He turned the key in the lock and opened the door just a crack. "Who's there?" He was standing against the wall clear of the door in case anyone tried to force it open or shoot through the panel.

"Open up. Quickly, before someone sees me."

It was a woman's voice, and Shayne opened the bedroom door just enough to let her come in.

It was no surprise to Shayne that the woman was the younger sister, Bobbie. She wore clinging shortie pajamas and a thin silk robe and no shoes or slippers.

Shayne said: "What do you want?"

"You know damn well what I want," Bobbie said in a low, seductive voice. She closed and locked the bedroom door from the inside.

"If you're half the man I think you are, you want it too."

Shayne was neither surprised nor shocked. He'd met plenty of reckless, oversexed, rich young women before. He'd know how to handle this one too.

"It doesn't make any difference what I want, Bobbie," he said. "I'm working for your Mother, and having you in my room this time of night isn't part of the job. You better go on back to your own room."

"Forget it," she said. "Mother

gave up trying to manage any of us a long way back. Besides it isn't late yet. I doubt if it's even eleven o'clock."

She walked past him and sat down on his bed. "Besides, if you try to put me out, I'll scream. I'll scream my head off, and when they come to your locked door I'll say you dragged me in here."

She paused and looked up at him. "I'll say you dragged me in here and tried to rape me. How would you like that?"

Mike Shayne laughed. "Would they believe you—or would they figure I didn't have to rape you?"

That shocked Bobbie. She sat up straight on the bed, and even in the dark room Shayne could see the anger on her face. "You're insolent," she said. "Oh damn you, why did you have to say that?"

"I said it to wake you up," Shayne said. "You're an attractive woman, Bobbie. Too attractive to take chances with. I can't let myself make love to you while I'm on a job. Somebody might get hurt. You don't know how serious this is."

That had the effect the big man had intended. It eased her wounded pride and her hurt at his rejection. Also it got her mind going on a new tack.

"You better believe I know," she said. "Sue told me about

those vitamin pills. It was poison, wasn't it?"

Shayne looked down at her and nodded.

"First Frank and then Sue," Bobbie said. "That's what you're here about isn't it?"

He nodded again.

"And here I try to get it all messed up thinking about sex," Bobbie Henderson said. "What I ought to be thinking about instead is which one of us will be next the next to die. Who will be the new target?"

They didn't have long to wait for an answer to that question.

Even as she spoke, they heard a muffled explosion from the room next door.

IV

MIKE SHAYNE and Bobbie Henderson were out of the room and into the hallway in seconds. Other doors were opening and family members appearing in their night clothes.

Of the others only Sam Henderson kept his head. He yanked open a closet door down the hall and hauled out two professional size fire extinguishers as Mike Shayne tried to open the door of the burning room. It was locked. He looked down. The key was in the lock on the hallway side of the door.

He turned the key.

Then Shayne and Sam



Henderson each took a fire extinguisher into the room.

They got the fire out inside fifteen minutes.

There had been an incendiary device placed behind the big old fashioned mahogany chest of drawers where Bobbie kept her clothes. There was still the remains of a cheap alarm clock to show how it had been timed to ignite.

When the device went off it had exploded a small can of gasoline so that the flaming liquid ran out over the rug. The

heat had charred furniture, walls and carpet.

Anyone sleeping in the room would have died in moments trying to get out the locked door.

It was Bobbie's room. She wouldn't have had a chance.

"I don't understand," the girl kept saying over and over. "I just don't understand."

Mike Shayne had been checking over the room to see that the fire was completely out. Fortunately the walls and floor were only charred. If the fire had been allowed to burn only a few minutes longer, they might have ignited too, and the whole house would have gone.

"Should we call the fire department?" Roberta Henderson asked.

"Not unless you want a lot of publicity and the police in on this," Shayne told her. "The fire is out, but they'd spot the fact it was arson and want to know why. There's no more danger to the house from this fire."

"In that case we don't want the police," Sam Henderson said, speaking for his mother and sisters.

"Somebody wanted your sister Bobbie to die in her bed," Mike Shayne explained. "See here."

He moved the chest of drawers away from the wall and

studied the charred remains of the device behind it for a moment.

"Look. Somebody put a big shallow cardboard pan, the kind rolls are sold in at a supermarket, on the floor and poured about half an inch of gasoline in it. Then he set a plastic jug of gasoline in one corner of the pan and an old fashioned wind up alarm clock in the other."

"You can see that the alarm is wound up by a metal key sticking out the back of the clock. Easy enough to scotch tape the striker from a match box to the back of the clock and a match to the winding key. When the alarm went off the key would revolve and rub the match against striker to set it off. That flame lights the gas in the tray and that in turn burns through the plastic jug and lets the rest of the gas run into the room. Instant disaster."

"Oh, my God," Bobbie Henderson said.

"My Baby," said her mother taking the girl into her arms.

"Where's your grandfather?" Shayne asked.

"In bed and sound asleep," Sam Henderson said. "Once he corks off for the night it would take a lot more than this to wake him up. Sue, you run up and make sure, though."

"Don't wake him. Just see

that he's okay," Mike Shayne advised.

The detective drew Bobbie Henderson aside. "Did you come right from your room to mine? That door had to be locked after you left the room unless you did it."

"I didn't lock anything," Bobbie said. "It's years since I even had a key to that door. No, I didn't come straight to your room. I went downstairs to the kitchen and fixed myself a drink first. Do you think the thing was planted then?"

"I don't know," Shayne said. "It could have been planted anytime at all. The whole thing could have fit inside a plastic garbage bag. That way you couldn't smell the gas—and when it went off the garbage bag would burn through in a second. Obviously, somebody came down and locked your door from the outside after you left. Whoever it was must have thought you were asleep inside. If you had been, you'd be dead now."

Sam Henderson spoke suddenly. "Where in the hell is Pete? How come he's never in the house when there's trouble and we need him?"

"I don't know about that," Mike Shayne said, "but you've raised a good question right there. Does anyone know where he is?"

"I don't know where he is for sure," Bobbie said, "but I'm willing to bet it's the Dingo Club. That's where he's been hanging out lately anyway."

Mike Shayne said: "Is that so?"

"Do you know the place?"

"I know it," Mike Shayne said in a tone that also conveyed the fact that he didn't like it. "I'd better go up there and see if I can find Peter. It's time this whole family had some straight talk—and he'll have to be in on it. While I'm gone you people get some clothes on and make some coffee."

"And," he added. "It might be a good idea if you all stay together where you can see each other."

THE DINGO CLUB was a popular hangout for some rather rough young people. It was a long run up Collins Avenue and highway A1A from the Henderson home. The location was just north of "The Corners" where the causeway from North Miami Beach on the mainland dead-ended at the sea.

This was the heart of Motel Row, more commonly called The Strip. It was here that the long-haired, bearded, wild young people came to buy everything from beer to the hard narcotics. After dark they

swarmed the area in their hundreds and even thousands.

Some of the "deals," the narcotics buys, were made right on the street, others in the big motels, still others in small, dimly-lit side street joints.

The Dingo was one of these.

Set on a dark street, whose lighting had fallen victim to vandalism, The Dingo Club was flanked on its left by a pitch-black alleyway.

As Shayne crossed the patch of inky void, a furtive movement caught his eye.

Three bearded and shoeless young men who might have been brothers stood in a solid line across the alley entry.

Without a word they spread out and came at Mike Shayne.

One was swinging a beer bottle like a club. The man in the middle produced a switchblade knife. The third had only his hands. They closed in rapidly.

Shayne threw his body to one side and kicked the man with the bottle in the groin. The force of the kick threw him clear back into the alley, where the hood's twisting, falling body crashed into a bank of garbage cans. The punk lay twitching and moaning among the spilled refuse.

The man with the knife was half-stoned himself. He came on with arms spread wide, making long slicing cuts

through the air with his knife and jumping in and out on stiffened legs.

Mike Shayne had been up against plenty of professional knife fighters in his day, and this performance was merely ludicrous to him.

He clamped one hand around the man's knife wrist and pulled him off balance. Then he topped off with a karate chop to the neck that dropped the tough on the sidewalk.

The third man was neither as tough nor as bellicose as his two friends. He wasn't as stoned. He got the point and bolted for the alley instead of continuing to attack the big red-head.

Mike Shayne caught him only one step short of the alleyway.

There was no fight at all left in this one. "Look man," he said. "I ain't done nothing. Like what do you want to kill us all for?"

"I don't want to kill anybody unless I have to," Shayne said, holding him fast. "It was you boys jumped me. Remember."

"It was no idea of mine, man," his captive protested. "You come busting along like you had all the dough in the world. How could we know? We was just after your wallet. Like a hand-out. You know."

Shayne said nothing.

"Fantastic, man. Fantastic—only you give us no time at all. So okay. So let me go."

Shayne said: "You know this neighborhood. You know who comes here. I'm looking for Pete Henderson. Is he here tonight?"

"I never heard of no such guy, mister."

"You heard of him," Shayne said. He shook a fist the size of a small ham under the fellow's nose. "You gonna make me wake up your memory with this? I can beat your teeth through the back of your head or twist your neck like a chicken's if I have to."

"You are fantastic," the hood said. "I do believe you mean just that—but I got no wish to be mister chicken of the week. I think you can find the guy you want in the club—that is if you want to break in on him."

"Let's go," the detective said.

"Sure . . . sure Only may be you better know I don't think he's gonna like you busting in. And if he don't, you could get hurt."

"Why won't he like it?" Shayne asked. "Is he a user and high on something?"

"Not that I know about," the other said. "Honest, mister, I don't think he goes for anything but liquor. Like I do. No in his case it would be because he has a chick with him. Lots of guys get sore when you bust

in and they got a broad with them."

"Let's go to the club."

The man walked—with Shayne holding his bicep firmly. At the unpainted door, marked only by a worn, dingy sign saying "Dingo's," Mike Shayne pushed his jacket aside enough so the hood could see the big black Colt's forty-five caliber automatic holstered back of his right hip.

"Go on now. Get out of here. If and when your pals come to, tell them if they bother me again, I won't rough them up. I'll use this gun."

The punk lost no time in running back to the dark alley, where he disappeared, leaving his buddies where they lay.

Shayne grunted and turned his attention to the Dingo Club.

The street front was windowless and unpainted. Only the doorway broke the monotony of the dingy brick. A hooded light ineffective to the street, illuminated the small sign, and a doorbell beneath it.

When Mike Shayne pulled at the door it was locked from the inside. He knocked with one big hand. No answer. Shayne's second knock almost stove in the upper panel of the door. This time the door was cracked inward a couple of inches, and a voice said:

"Hold it, man. Who's there?"

Shayne said: "I am."

"Sure," said the voice, "but who are you, man?"

The door cracked slightly more open and a thin, young, unwashed and heavily bearded face peered out. Brown eyes looked at the big man, and then the door started to close.

Mike Shayne leaned back, lifted one big foot to kick the door in. There was a cheap stamped brass chain on the door but the hasp would easily tear right out of the jamb.

"Hey!" The man inside took a step backward. "Hold it! I'll let you in. What's the beef, man?" The chain was snicked out of the jamb lock, and the door opened fully.

"Henderson," Shayne said. "What room?" The door man started to hesitate, but Shayne's swiftly doubled fist made him answer.

"Upstairs."

"Take me to him. And no funny stuff, punk," Shayne growled. "I've had enough trouble out here. You give me any, and I'll take care of you like I did those three punks in your alley."

Mike Shayne stepped into the Club, the door man acquiescing quietly.

The main room of the Dingo Club was small, only about fifteen by twenty feet, and very dimly lit.

To Shayne's left there was a row of three small booths. Two girls sat in one and held hands. They were glassy eyed and totally oblivious to what went on about them.

On the big man's right there was a small bar along the wall. There wasn't any bartender behind it—only a mirror and a couple of shelves of bottles.

"Where's Pete," Shayne demanded.

"This way," the door man said. He led Shayne through the main room, and up a dark, creaking flight of dirty stairs.

At a battered door on the second floor, the man halted.

"Beat it," Shayne growled.

The man took off fast down the stairs.

Shayne could hear movement behind the door and there was light shining out through the cracks around the frame, but he decided not to knock on the door.

Instead the big man took his key case of lock picks from his jacket pocket. Within a couple of minutes he had the door unlocked and pushed it open—ready to fight or talk as the occasion might call for.

V

THERE WAS A WOMAN on the bed all right, but Pete Henderson wasn't making love to her. He

was working over her like a doctor with wet towels and obviously trying to bring her out of whatever drug-induced "trip" she was in.

Henderson looked up and saw Shayne and said: "Can't I get away from you shamus? What the hell are you doing here anyway?"

"I came looking for you," the big private detective said matter of factly.

There was nothing much in the room but a bed, a cheap dresser and a couple of chairs, and a battered bucket of ice-water Pete Henderson was using to keep the towels cold and wet.

The girl on the bed was fully dressed in a sport shirt and shocking pink slacks and sandals. She was very blond with long, unwashed hair and probably in her middle twenties. Once she might even have been beautiful, but now the emaciation and skin pallor of the drug addict had made her a caricature of her former self.

"Can you help me with her?" Peter Henderson asked without stopping what he was doing. "I've been working on her for an hour now and she won't come to. I think maybe she's in a bad way." Henderson's voice was shaky.

"I know she's in a bad way by her looks," Shayne said.



"You're doing all you can or I could . . . and it's not enough by a long shot."

The girl's eyes were open and empty of life. Her skin was hot and dry and her respiration shallow and harsh.

"She needs a doctor," Shayne continued. "Pick her up and bring her along."

"No doctor," Henderson said. "Doctors report things. My God, man, I don't want her *busted!*"

"Busted or buried—which is best?" Shayne asked him. "Don't be a fool. From the looks of her she could die or go out of her mind anytime. We've got no choice. Pick her up and bring her along and I'll take you to a doctor I know. He won't report this—if you can convince me he shouldn't."

"You know a lot of people," Peter Henderson said.

He picked up the girl in his arms. She was so emaciated that he could carry her easily. Her bones showed through the skin of arms and legs.

Nobody stopped them all the way to Mike Shayne's car.

They all got in the front seat—Peter Henderson holding the girl beside him with her head on his shoulder.

"We aren't going far," Shayne said. "If anybody stops us, you let me do the talking."

Shayne drove north on A1A past the garish motels with their parking lots full of expensive out-of-state cars. On the sidewalks and in the bars the tourists jostled with the wild young people of the drug culture.

In the restaurants and motel lobbies the patrons were almost all tourist types. Drug people hated to waste money on food.

After about a quarter of a mile Mike Shayne turned left. Here in a section eight city blocks long by ten wide, lying between the neon jungle of "The Strip" and Biscayne Bay was an older development of private homes.

Doctor Kane lived and had his office in one of these. He was an old man, white haired and bent but still keen eyed, and he had lived and practiced

on Miami Beach for most of his life.

At one time Kane had one of the most lucrative medical practices on the Gold Coast, but age had brought semi-retirement. He worked only in his home and only for a few long time close friends.

Mike Shayne was one of these.

When the redhead identified himself, the doctor opened up at once. After getting the facts from Henderson, he worked over the young woman quickly and surely. After some minutes he looked up.

"She'll be okay now," he told Shayne.

"Thanks, Doc," Mike Shayne said.

"I have a spare room," the old doctor went on. "I'd prefer she stay here where I can look in on her every little while. Who is she, Mike? I'm supposed to know, you understand."

"I understand. Actually. I don't know who she is myself. She's a friend of this young man, and he's the son of a client of mine. I'd take it kindly, though, if you'd not make it police business. As far as I know she isn't wanted for anything, and I know young Peter here is good for whatever it costs."

Peter Henderson said quickly: "Thanks, Shayne. Yes

I'm good for her care. Here." He handed the doctor his driver's license. "That's my name and address. Her name is Alice Kerns and she hasn't any family. That's a married name, but Duke Kerns deserted her three years back. I do know her well, and outside of being a user, she's on the right side of the law."

"I'll keep her here then," Doctor Kane said. "As a matter of fact she should stay a day or so. Now you two get out of here. Everything's under control."

WHEN THEY were back at the car Shayne said: "I'm going to stop at a restaurant on The Strip. You and I better have a talk before I take you home."

Shayne picked an all night eating place where the booths were private and the steaks and beer both excellent. He ordered beer and thick, rare steak sandwiches for both.

Peter Henderson began the conversation. "Who sent you after me? Was it Mother?"

"Not exactly," Shayne said. "Under the circumstances I thought I'd better round you up and bring you in."

"Under what circumstances? You still don't believe that nonsense about somebody trying to kill us all, do you? And who told you where to look for

me? Oh—I suppose that must have been dear little Bobbie."

Shayne realized that he still hadn't mentioned the fire in Bobbie's room.

"It was your sister all right. She wanted you back because somebody tried to kill her too."

He saw the shock in Peter Henderson's face and went on to tell him about the incendiary device and the locked door of Bobbie's room.

It made Peter very thoughtful. "I guess maybe I ought to apologize to you after all," he said to the big man. "That sort of thing was no accident. I guess maybe somebody is after us. It can't be one of the family though. We love each other, damn it. I just can't believe that."

"Who else can it be?" Shayne asked. "Give me a suspect, boy. At least give me a motive. Who would want you dead? No matter how far fetched it may be—can you think of anyone at all?"

They sat quietly for a minute, eating their sandwiches and drinking beer before young Peter replied. When he did it was in a serious tone.

"I can't give you a motive or a suspect, Shayne. I wish I could but I can't. None of us have any enemies who would kill—or for that matter I can't think of anyone who would

have anything to gain by doing it. I simply can't."

"How about that bunch at the Dingo Club?" Mike Shayne asked. "Those are rough lads in case you didn't know. Any one of that bunch would cut your throat for a few bucks or the credit card in your wallet. When you run with that sort, you can have enemies and never realize it. Any one of them could hate you for living in a big house and sleeping in clean sheets."

"You could be right about that," Henderson said. "They aren't suspects, though. I hardly know them and they know nothing about me. I'm not on dope. They've seen me come in and out of there, but it has nothing to do with them."

"What does it have to do with? Alice Kerns?"

Shayne could see that Peter Henderson didn't want to talk about the girl. He waited.

Finally: "I knew you'd have to know about that. It isn't her fault. She's got nothing at all to do with murder. She's a user, sure, but not the type to kill anybody. She doesn't have to. I . . . I give her money when she needs it."

He stopped.

"Go on," Shayne said.

"If you have to know—yes, I'm in love with Alice. I have been for a couple of years now.

At first I didn't know she was an addict. Afterwards what could I do? You know how they are . . ."

"I know," the detective told him.

"The last few months I've been just about desperate. She won't take help from me. The truth is I think she doesn't really want to quit. I can't leave her though. You saw how she was tonight."

"I saw," Shayne said, "and I know what will happen to her if she isn't stopped. Why don't you pick her up and have her put in a private hospital for treatment."

"I haven't the bread," Peter Henderson said. "The money. I've asked. Those places cost a fortune and, even then they can't guarantee any results."

"It's her only chance," Shayne said.

"Now look, Mr. Shayne," Henderson protested. "I'm not trying to con you. I don't have the bread to put Alice in one of those places. You seem to think like everyone else in the world that the Henderson family is rich. We were once maybe—but we aren't now and you better believe it."

"I know what you think, the big house and all. That damn house is eating us up. We only keep it going because it would break Gramps' heart to have to

move. When he dies that place goes on the market the very next day. You can bet on that.

"As it is we just about get by. There's what's left of a trust that bought all the wrong stocks to begin with. There's a little money that Mother inherited when her people died. Then there's what Sam brings in from the business. Add that all up, cut it off by the taxes on the house and grounds, and see what inflation does to the little that's left. Mr. Shayne, you wouldn't believe how little we really have."

He stopped and thought for a minute. Then he said hastily: "There'll be enough for your fees though. Mother will take care of that if she has to sell the jewelry you're supposed to be looking for. You don't have to worry."

"Right now that's the least of my worries," Mike Shayne said. "I believe the rest of what you said too, but that shouldn't stop you from doing something about Alice if you really want to help her all that bad. There are government facilities for treating addicts. Like the one at Lexington, Kentucky. Had you thought of that?"

"I've thought of everything. The trouble with the government narc centers is to get in you have to be busted first or sign in yourself—which she

won't do. I've begged her and she won't. Or your family has to sign you in."

"What's the matter with that? Hasn't she got a family?"

"Oh, she's got a family, but I can't tell them. It would break their hearts . . . it would kill them to know what she is now. I mean it."

"How do you know?"

"I know because her only relatives are her grandparents and . . ."

Peter paused with an expression of anguish on his face.

"They cooked your dinner and served it to you tonight. Alice is the granddaughter of old Bill and Dora Harris."

For once in his life Mike Shayne could think of nothing at all to say. Instead he finished his steak sandwich and drank the rest of his beer.

The young man with him was in torment and could not eat at all, and the big redhead could fully appreciate his reasons.

At the same time he could appreciate another fact.

For the first time in this whole case Shayne's earlier suspicions took on concrete form. There was a motive strong enough to make a man kill. Considerable motive.

Young Peter was watching the girl he loved degenerate and die from hard narcotic ad-

diction. He knew what was happening to her and knew that he could not help. He also knew—or thought he knew—that his own helplessness stemmed from a simple lack of money.

If his grandfather and mother died, the family money would be distributed to the children, augmented by at least a couple of hundred thousand dollars from the sale of the house and the land upon which it sat.

Suppose, too, that instead of there being five children to inherit, there were only two or three—or only one. Frank Henderson was dead. Attempts had been made upon the two girls. Who would be next?

Although the Henderson family seemed unusually devoted, with the life of the woman he loved depending upon his getting money, Peter Henderson could nerve himself up to murder; even the cold-blooded and very deliberate series of first degree murders that would wipe out the family.

VI

AFTER THEY LEFT the restaurant and started South on Collins Avenue, Mike Shayne knew that he was being followed. The car was an aged foreign "bug" painted an inconspicuous

black—and it was being driven by someone who was a real professional.

It hung well back, but it came right along with them.

Shayne twisted about and made a couple of needless turns to be absolutely sure. Each time he looked in the rear view mirror the little car was still there.

The big man drove on towards the Henderson home. He didn't go all the way, however.

"Somebody is tailing this car," he told Peter Henderson. "I'm going to turn into a side street in a minute. When I do and he can't see us I want you to get out of the car. Get back of some bushes or something till he passes and then walk on home. Tell your family I'll be along shortly."

"What about...?"

"About Alice and where I found you?" Shayne finished for him. "Right now that's your business. Tell them whatever it is you think they should hear. At this point I'll respect your privacy."

The young man gave him a serious look. "Thanks. I really mean it, Mr. Shayne. I really do."

"Okay. I'm going to take the next right. It slants off so the tail can't see us till he turns the corner himself. As soon as we're out of his sight I'm going

to slow down so you can jump out."

Mike Shayne knew this older section of Miami Beach like the palm of his hand. He slowed, and Peter Henderson quickly left the car, running into the shadows. A couple of minutes drive from where he dropped Henderson there was a private street. It had one entrance and then made a closed circle for about a quarter mile. Anyone driving all the way through had to come out eventually by the same way he had come in. It was a perfect cul de sac in which to ambush a tail.

Mike Shayne did just that. He turned into the circle, drove all the way round and then deliberately parked his car across the way to block the exit. Shayne left his car, then, and hid in the shadows.

He was none too soon.

The little black bug came forward till the driver saw the street was blocked and braked to a stop.

When he did, Mike Shayne stepped out of the bushes, pulled open the door of the little car and sat down beside the driver.

There wasn't much of anything the man could do.

They sat there and looked at each other.

The driver couldn't even protest innocence. He and the big



redhead were old acquaintances.

"Well well Charlie Smith," Shayne said. "When did you stop catching couples in hotel rooms and decide to get into the big time?"

"I don't know what you mean Mike."

"Sure you do, Charlie, sure you do. The case I'm working tonight is Murder One, old buddy boy. It's likely whoever hired you to follow me is the killer. So that makes you a what?"

Shayne paused to let the thought sink in. Then he con-

tinued. "It makes you an accessory after the fact, and you damned well know it, Charlie."

"The hell it does," Smith protested. "I don't know nothing about no Murder One. I was hired to keep book on where you go and what you do. That's all I know. I swear."

"Save your breath," Shayne said. "At least save it till I get you down to Miami Beach headquarters and Petey Painter starts asking the questions. The least you can lose is your license to practice."

"You wouldn't do that!" Smith protested.

"Sure I would. I know it and you know it . . . That is I would unless you start singing to me right now."

Charlie Smith thought that over. Mike Shayne's grim and overpowering presence gave him little choice—and he knew it perfectly well.

"Okay, okay," he finally said. "I'll tell you what I can, Mike—only you gotta believe me, I don't know nothing about no murder hanky-panky. Nobody hires me to have nothing to do with no murder."

"Well then suppose you see if you can convince me. Who did hire you?"

"You aren't going to believe this, Shayne, but I don't know. I honestly don't know."

All Mike Shayne said was: "I

don't believe it. You're right with that."

"Honest, Shayne. I don't know. I never met the guy. All I know is a voice on the phone. He just called me today and we ain't had time for a meet. You know how it is."

"I know you don't work for nothing," Mike Shayne said. "Either you met this guy when he handed you cash or there was a name on a check."

"Neither one. I swear it to you. Just a voice. The retainer is in the mail. Normally I don't work that way, but times have been real slow lately. You know how it is. Besides . . ." Smith cut off there.

"Besides what?" Shayne demanded. "Don't you fool around with me, Charley—or I mean it, we'll go downtown and I'll file charges that'll cost you your license. I told you this was no nickle and dime case. It's Murder One and you're right in the middle of it whether you like it or not."

Smith sat and weighed fear against caution and greed.

"Okay then. This is it, Shayne—and I swear on my mother's grave this is the truth. He promised me the fee in gold. Honest to God, Mike. What he promised me is five hundred clams in United States gold coin. For that I take a chance. You see?"

"If you're telling the truth, I can see," Shayne said. "You figure five hundred in gold is worth a lot more than that on today's market for coins. Maybe seven or eight thousand even if you blackmarket the coins—and possibly a lot more. So you're willing to wait so you can cheat your client blind. It's about like that, isn't it?"

"Something like that," Charlie Smith admitted. "If the mooch don't send the money, all I'm out is a few hours sleep and a little gas tailing you around. If he does, he may be handing me a fortune, depending on the date of the coins. You see."

"I see."

"What're you going to do now, Shayne? I swear I ain't in on no Murder One. You want I should split the coins with you?"

Mike Shayne got out of the car. "You go right on and do your job tailing me. When your man calls tell him just what you saw—and try to get something I can spot him with."

"And the coins?"

"If you get a package in the mail, you hold it and turn it over to me with the wrapping unbroken. Otherwise you'll answer to the law and to me personally."

Mike Shayne got back in his own car and moved it so that

Charlie Smith could get out of the cul de sac. Then he sat for a few minutes thinking over what he had just learned.

He wished he didn't have to believe the other private eye's story, but he found that he did believe it.

Smith was a shyster and a cheat, a divorce case specialist of a very low order. He wouldn't hesitate to lie, but in this case his story was too implausible to be a lie. Charlie Smith hadn't the brains to think that one up.

On the other hand, he was just the sort to jump at the chance to cheat a gullible and ignorant client out of valuable gold coins.

Shayne hadn't a doubt that whoever Smith's client was, he was connected with the Henderson household. That was the sort of family that would have some old gold hoarded away and half forgotten. Whoever used it to make a pay-off could do so with the assurance it couldn't be traced to him. After all, there would be no bank withdrawal and no sudden shortages of cash on anyone's part.

Peter Henderson could have managed such a deal, and would be smart enough to think to set it up by phone and mail. He might figure Shayne would possibly spot a tail.

On the other hand, suppose Alice Kerns had been in touch with her grandparents? No one knew what a junkie would do, not even the junkie herself when under the influence. Suppose the old people knew their granddaughter was in deep trouble, even knew or suspected that Peter Henderson was involved?

In that case they might have wanted Mike Shayne followed in case his trail turned up the girl. Bill and Dora Harris were probably both capable of thinking of that.

It could also have been any other family member. It might not even have a connection with the actual killer.

Time would tell. Mike Shayne would let Charlie Smith go ahead and make his report—and then see if anyone in the household made a suspicious move as a result.

A decision made, Mike Shayne drove directly back to the Henderson home, with Charlie Smith dutifully following in the little black bug.

At the entrance to the Henderson driveway the gate had been left open as it had been when he had driven out. However, it had swung partly shut from the wind and its own weight.

Shayne parked his car half-way in from the street and got

out to open the gate all the way.

When he did that he saved his own life.

He had left the motor running and the headlights on, and in the headlight beam he picked up a reflection that shouldn't have been there. A careless or foolish man wouldn't have investigated. Mike Shayne was neither.

The big man walked slowly up the driveway. He lost the gleam and then picked it up again.

A thin wire was stretched across the driveway about three feet off the ground where the hood of a car in the drive would have run into it.

On the right side of the road the wire was fast to the trunk of a loquat tree.

Over on the left, on the driver's side for a car coming in, it was an entirely different matter. A handsome double barreled shotgun had been wired into the branches of a Brazilian pepper tree. The wire coming across the drive was hooked around the triggers to fire both barrels.

Mike Shayne sighted along the ventilation rib of the gun.

Anyone driving a car the size of his own up the driveway would have taken the loads of both shells in the head, neck or upper chest.

Mike Shayne didn't think the trap had been there for very long.

Peter Henderson could have rigged it while Shayne was talking to Smith. Someone else in the family could have set it up after Henderson had arrived back and they knew he was in the house.

On the other hand whoever set it up might not have cared whether Shayne or Henderson or for that matter both of them, were the victims.

There was no way he could tell.

Shayne dismantled the trap, threw the gun in the back seat, and drove the rest of the way to the big house through the winding driveway.

Someone had left the light on for him over the big front door.

VII

MICHAEL SHAYNE found that the family hadn't taken his advice about staying together in his absence.

Bobbie Henderson let him in when he rang the doorbell. She was a very much subdued young lady. She'd put on a blue linen slack suit and a white blouse and low-heeled shoes and was carrying a brass poker from the fireplace set in the living room—presumably for self defense in case of emergency.

That last touch amused the big redheaded detective. The killer they were up against was far too smart to make a direct attack that could be fended off so easily.

Or, on the other hand, was he?

All Mike Shayne really knew about the killer was that he or she was devious, clever and tremendously determined.

"Where is everybody?" Shayne asked.

"Mother and Pete are having some sort of huddle in the den," Bobbie told him. "Gramps and I were having a drink in the living room. I don't know where the rest of them are."

"I'll bet the killer does," Mike Shayne said. "What's the old man doing downstairs at this time of night?"

"Talking to me," Bobbie Henderson said, then realized why the big man had asked. "Oh, I see what you mean. He doesn't sleep well. Most old people don't. Sometimes he's up and down half the night—and this is a rather special night."

"I'll come in and talk with you and your grandfather for minute if you don't mind," Shayne said. "I want to see your mother anyway after she's through talking with your brother. I may as well wait there."

"Fine." Bobbie led the way.

The old man was sitting in the most comfortable easy chair in the living room.

He had probably been sleeping earlier because, in spite of the lateness of the hour, his eyes were bright and alert. It occurred to Mike Shayne that this was a remarkable old man. His family seemed to think that he was senile, and at times his conversation did seem to ramble way off the point at hand. On the other hand he got around without crutches or a wheelchair and seemed to have very positive opinions of his own.

At this moment he was in a particularly feisty mood.

"Get out of here, Bobbie," he said to his granddaughter. "I want to have a talk with this big detective, and it won't concern you."

"I'd prefer that we all stay together under the circumstances," Mike Shayne said.

"And I'd prefer that you and I have a private talk," the old man snapped at him. "Since this is my house, and you're an employee of the family, right now, let's say that my wishes take priority."

Mike Shayne almost laughed at the bellicose old man in spite of himself, but he managed to keep a straight face. "I'm afraid it has to be the other way around as long as there's

danger to this family," he said. "There is danger, and I don't want you all separated."

"Are you trying to give me orders in my own house?"

"I'm trying to say we can work out a compromise. Bobbie, you go round up your brother Sam and your sister Sue. The three of you go out on the Florida room over there where you can be together and your grandfather and I can keep an eye on you while we talk. At the same time you'll be too far away to overhear us. How's that with you, sir?"

"Compromise," Gramps Henderson snapped, "I guess maybe it'll do."

That was the way they did it. Bobbie went for the others.

When they were alone the old man turned to Shayne.

"I gather you've found out about that girl Peter thinks he is in love with."

The big detective was genuinely surprised. "Did Peter say anything about that when he came in?"

"He didn't have to. I could tell by the look on him and by the way he acted. Came in black as a thunderhead and then went out again and stormed around the place like he always does in his wild moods. Then back and wants to talk to his mother alone. I suppose he's in there now confess-

ing anything and everything to her. Young fool."

"Apparently you know all about Peter's affairs," Mike Shayne said.

"Sure I do. I'm the head of this family since that son of mine died, and it's up to me to know what goes on. I know what that girl is—and what's more to the point I know who she is."

"Peter told you?"

"He's my favorite, that boy," the old man said. "Keeps no secrets from his old Gramps. I can't get him to stop worrying though. I told him I'd pay the expenses for his girl to take the cure. I told him, but he won't believe me. Just keeps on worrying and fretting he does. I suppose you found him with her tonight?"

"Something like that," Shayne admitted.

"Good. Good. What harm if he does sow a few wild oats while he's young? God knows I did my share at his age, and it's only natural the boy should do the same. Good luck to him and may he be happy say I."

"It wasn't exactly that way," Mike Shayne said. "By the way—you say you know who the girl is. Doesn't that bother you at all?"

"Bother me? Why should it bother me? Oh I suppose you mean her being a Harris, a



child of servants? Well if that's it, my answer is no. It doesn't bother me one bit. Bill and Dora are fine people. Known them both for years.

"No, it doesn't bother me one little bit. More likely to be the other way round as a matter of fact."

Mike Shayne was interested. "Just what do you mean when you say that?"

"Bill and Dora Harris are fine people," Gramps told him. "Real fine people. If they have a fault at all, it's that they're more strait-laced than we are. Strict church-going people all their lives and both of them live by the Good Book as they say. I'm sure that Pete's too

wild for their taste. That would bother them when it came to him marrying their granddaughter a lot more than anything would upset the rest of us."

"I see," Shayne said. He lifted his hand and tugged at the lobe of his left ear.

Up to this point he hadn't really considered Bill and Dora Harris as suspects in the attempted murders. What had the old couple to gain by killing members of the family whom they had served so long and so well?

Now Gramps had given him a motive. Suppose the old couple knew of Alice's addiction and blamed it on Peter?

Shayne's mind filed the fact and endeavored to put it in proper relation to the other puzzling facts in the case. Aloud, he said: "You seem to think a great deal of Peter, Mr. Henderson."

"I do indeed."

"Almost as if he could do no wrong in your eyes I would say?"

The old man chuckled, but there was no real mirth to the sound and his eyes were deadly serious.

"No 'almost' about it, Mr. Shayne. Pete is just about the finest young man I've ever seen. Like me he is. Like me at his age—only smarter and

tougher. Yes sir, there goes the pick of the litter for sure. There's just about nothing I wouldn't do for Peter."

The telephone rang and Sue came in from the Florida room to answer it. "It's for you, Mr. Shayne," she said and held out the instrument to the big detective.

Shayne was at a loss to know who could be calling him at the Henderson house, but he recognized the voice at once.

It was old Doctor Kane.

"Mike," the doctor said, "I thought I'd better tell you. That damn fool young woman is gone. She must have come to her senses a while back and walked out while I was dozing. I took my car for a quick swing around the neighborhood but I couldn't spot her anywhere. Then I figured I'd better call you in case it was real important you find her."

"Thanks," Shayne said. "I appreciate it. What sort of shape is she in, Doc? I mean is it safe for her to be walking around?"

"I'd say she's about as safe as she's been at any time in the last few months, Mike. The girl's a hard addict. I don't think she realizes where she is or what she's doing most of the time anyway. She could walk in front of a car or get herself an overdose tonight, or she

could go on for a couple of years yet. No way to tell."

"Thanks," Mike Shayne said.

"Thanks for calling, Doc."

He put the phone back in its cradle.

Gramps was watching from across the room, but Shayne had deliberately kept his voice low so the old man couldn't have overheard the conversation.

"Was it important?" the old man asked.

"Not particularly."

"Too bad," Gramps said. "I was kind of hoping it was somebody calling to offer you a retainer for another case."

Shayne laughed. "One thing I'll say for you—you don't give up easy."

"One more thing you can add to that," Gramps said firmly, "is I don't ever give up at all. I'll be frank with you, Payne. I haven't approved since I heard that Roberta had hired you. I know what you think you're here for, and I can tell you right now that you're wrong. This family has no murderer."

"Who set the device to burn Bobbie?" Shayne asked.

"She set it herself I guess," Gramps said. "Bobbie's always been a hysterical girl. Wild like Pete but without his brains. Just wanted to attract attention to herself. Easy enough for her to set that fool thing—lock

herself out of her room and wait for it to go off. And where was she when it did? In your room I hear. Is that a part of your job?"

Shayne didn't dignify that with an answer, nor did the old man require one.

"In any case, Mr. Laine," the old man said. "You're fired. I want you out of this house in the morning. You hear me now."

Mike Shayne just said: "You didn't hire me, Mr. Henderson, I'm sorry."

"You mean Roberta? I'll speak to her and you can take it for a fact that you're fired. It's my money that supports this household and this family, Shayne, and you can take it that when money talks, everybody listens. I say you get out of here in the morning, and you'll go."

VIII

MIKE SHAYNE saw no point in arguing with the old man. He'd been warned that Gramps still thought himself the head of the family and that the rest of them humored him in the belief.

Before morning he meant to have this case wound up anyway. There was a pattern forming in the big detective's mind that was pointing more and

more clearly to one person as the killer he was seeking.

They sat in silence for a few minutes.

Then Mrs. Henderson and a white and chastened looking Peter Henderson came into the room together.

Mrs. Henderson came straight to Mike Shayne. "If you don't mind, I'd like to have a word with you in private."

"Certainly."

"The rest of you go on up to bed," Gramps called out loudly.

"That's where I'm going. Ain't a bit of use in us all sitting around here being afraid of each other. This is a fine family and it's always been a loving one—and it better start acting like that again. Go on. All of you get some rest."

He got up and started for the stairs, moving spryly in spite of his age. Peter Henderson hurried over to take his grandfather's arm as he got to the foot of the stairs.

The others looked at Mike Shayne.

The big man grinned at them. "I guess it's safe for you all to get some rest," he said. "I don't think anyone will be in danger for the rest of the night at least."

They looked relieved and started for the stairs.

Mike Shayne and their mother watched them go.

Then Roberta Henderson turned to the detective. "Isn't that rather a change of attitude on your part? I thought you felt all of us were in real danger."

"You are," Shayne said solemnly. "You still are; and that includes you, Mrs. Henderson. However, I don't think the danger is as immediate as it was a few hours ago. I think the killer will go for me next before he tries to get any more of the family. He will if he's smart."

"How do you figure that?"

"Simple enough," Shayne said. "It's what I would do in his place. I'd figure this detective you brought in wasn't a total idiot. I'd figure the detective would close in on me sooner or later if I let him. So I'd try to make sure he didn't get the chance."

"Oh."

"As a matter of fact," Shayne continued. "that's exactly what the killer has decided." He told her about the shotgun trap that had been set for him in the driveway.

Roberta Henderson was shocked. "Mightn't that have been set for Peter? He'd taken his car out too."

"That all depends."

"On what?"

"On whether the trap was set before or after Peter returned to the house," Shayne ex-

plained. "You remember I didn't come back till fifteen or twenty minutes after he did, and he didn't drive in at all. His car is still up by the Dingo Club where I found him.

"Now you wanted to talk to me. Let's go out on the lawn where we can be sure no one will overhear what we say."

They crossed the patio and walked down the sloping lawn towards the sea wall and the ancient and crumbling boat dock. About half way down there was a huge and very old mango tree loaded with the juicy and fragrant fruit.

They paused in the shade of the big tree. It was a quiet night and the moon, which was almost three quarters full, made the open lawn almost as bright as day. Its rays sparkled on the rippling waters of Biscayne Bay. Across the Bay the night lights of Miami made a golden glow.

Roberta Hendersen said very seriously, "I suppose you're hinting that Peter set the trap for you."

Shayne didn't answer.

After a moment she said: "Peter has told me all about Alice Kerns, Mr. Shayne. It wasn't easy for him, I know, but he made a clean breast of it just now.

"I'm not a fool. I know that if Peter was a certain sort of

young man, if he had a twisted mind or was an addict himself, the whole situation might give him a motive for murder.

"I think I know my son, though. I think I know him well enough to be sure he is not that type."

Shayne said only: "He had the motive and the opportunity both. You must realize that."

"I know that," she said. "I know that and I know my children. Peter hasn't the character that would make him a murderer. He might kill in a rage, in passion—but not the sort of methodically planned things that have been happening in this house. That I won't believe."

"That's natural enough for you to say," Shayne told her. "Nobody's shown any other motive though. We know somebody is trying to kill our children. If not Peter—then who would it be?"

"I don't know. Not really that is. I guess half of me still won't even believe that it's happening at all. Half of me still thinks this is all a nightmare."

"It isn't," Mike Shayne said. "Think. Think hard."

"Oh, I'm trying," she said. "All I get is a wild thought. If it has to be one of the boys, then why not Sam? Sam was always the one to keep a grudge. Quiet and secret and

holding his grudges and his resentments."

"I hadn't thought of Sam," Mike Shayne said gravely.

"Oh I don't really think he could do it, either," Mrs. Henderson said bitterly. "Neither of my sons is a murderer—no matter what else they may be, neither one is that. Sam may resent the fact that Peter plays around and has never taken a job or seemed to want to. He wouldn't kill him for that, though. Besides nobody tried to kill Peter yet. Nobody has . . ."

She stopped, and even in the dim light under the mango tree Shayne could sense her realization of how damning for Peter her statement sounded.

The only one who hadn't been attacked—except Sam Henderson of course . . .

It was just at that moment that someone fired at the two of them from a window of the big old house.

The shot came from a small calibre rifle or pistol, Shayne couldn't really tell which.

He was facing that way so he saw the muzzle flash at the window. The sound of the shot was just a "pop" in the night.

The sound of the bullet embedding itself in the trunk of the big old mango tree was a vicious "thwack".

Roberta Henderson didn't even realize what it was until

Mike Shayne had put one big arm around her and pulled her behind the trunk of the tree.

Then she said: "Oh! My God!"

That was all she had time to say.

Mike Shayne had his own big Colt's forty-five out of its belt holster and was watching the house.

"The shot came from the corner room up there with the bay window," he said. "Whose is that?"

"Oh, my God," she said again. "That's my room."

"Well," Shayne said. "At least we know you didn't fire it."

"We've got to call in the police," Mrs. Henderson said. She was white and he could feel her body shake between his strong arm and the trunk of the tree.

"This has gone too far," she continued. "I didn't hire you to risk getting yourself killed. I could never forgive myself . . . We will call the police right now."

"I don't think we are going to have to do that," Mike Shayne said. "You may want to do that later. It'll be up to you. Right now I say no. And don't worry about me. The shot only hit the tree—whichever of us it was aimed at."

"Oh. What do you mean we don't need to call the police?"

"I mean," the big detective said, "that I know who the killer is."

IX

FIFTEEN MINUTES later Mike Shayne had the family all assembled in the big huge downstairs living room of the Henderson mansion.

Even the two old servants had been wakened and told to come down.

Mike Shayne directed the group to the couches and chairs which flanked the fireplace on both sides.

He himself remained standing so that he could watch every move that any one of them might make. One was a killer. He had used a gun once that night, and might be ready to use it again. And as the only man standing Shayne had the air of command and authority which he knew so well how to take and use.

Psychologically it is the standing man who is in command.

"I've called you down here despite the hour," he said, "because it is time to settle the matter for which I was hired by Mrs. Henderson. I'm sure you all know that my being here has nothing to do with any missing jewelry.

"Mrs. Henderson hired me



because she was convinced that the death of her son Frank was neither a suicide nor an accident."

"Nonsense," said old Gramps from the same easy chair he'd occupied earlier that evening. "Tell this theatrical fool that you have fired him, Roberta."

No one paid any attention to the old man.

"She was convinced," Mike Shayne continued as if nothing had happened, "that Frank had been killed. At first I didn't really believe her, but I hadn't been in this house very long before I knew that she was right.

"Someone in this household is trying to kill off this family one by one. That someone is ruthless and clever—and devi-

ous. The first couple of attempts were made to look like accidents, but the attempt to burn Bobbie in her bed could not possibly have been an accident. We have a case of a deliberate and carefully planned murder attempt there."

The detective paused and looked around the room. There was no doubt that he had the full attention of everyone there.

"In a case of this sort," he then went on, "any detective looks for two things in order to identify the killer. Those two are opportunity and motive to kill.

"In this household there is no lack of opportunity. Anyone of you here in this room had the chance to set up each of the murder attempts which were made tonight—including the two attempts which have been made on my own life."

He looked around again when he said that. He wanted to see if anyone showed surprise. He hadn't mentioned the shotgun trap to them. But nobody blinked an eye. The family sat there with the composed control of their class. The servants looked impersonally deferential.

"Everybody had the opportunity," Shayne said. "Opportunity was a drug on the market. The other ingredient that goes to tag a murder suspect

wasn't so easy to find. For a long while I couldn't see any motive at all. That had me puzzled. There has to be a motive when there's a murder—and this was a case of murder. It wasn't accident or manslaughter or a killing-in-the-heat-of-passion. These attempts were cold-blooded, planned and deliberate. This was a case of what we call Murder One or Murder in the First Degree, and for that there has to be a motive.

"I studied each of you in turn. Even Mr. Harris and his wife."

"Oh, no," Bill Harris cried. "We wouldn't harm the Hendersons. Why, they're just like our own family after all these years!"

"Of course," Roberta Henderson said. "It's absolutely unthinkable that they . . . Why it's impossible."

"Get on with it, man," old Gramps said from his chair. "If you have a point, make it."

"I will," Mike Shayne said. "I merely want to explain everything very carefully because you are all one family. This is a family matter until the police are called, and it is better that you all understand things perfectly well.

"I say that at first I was baffled by the apparent lack of a motive—and I was. I knew all

the time that there had to be a motive whether I could see it or not.

"If it wasn't obvious, that meant that it might not be a rational motive. Rational, or irrational, though, there had to be a motive. It was there someplace, and so in good time I knew I'd be able to discover it.

"After a while a pattern began to emerge. It began to focus my attention more and more on one member of the family."

"I know," Peter Henderson said. "That's me of course. It had to be me. I swear I didn't kill anybody or try to though! I swear I'm innocent!"

"Oh, Peter," his mother said. "Oh, Peter."

"The boy is innocent," Gramps insisted. "You better believe that, Mr. Detective."

"The case built up against Peter," Shayne said, and looked down at them all from his commanding position.

"Peter was desperately in need of money. Large sums of money. Very large. He needed it to save the life of someone he loved dearly—and that is one of the strongest of all the motives that there is.

"The only way he could get that money was to inherit it, or that's the way it must have seemed to Peter. What's more, he had to inherit more than his

single share of the family money. One share wouldn't be enough.

"If his brothers and sisters died before his mother, though, then Peter would inherit it all. That would be enough."

"I swear I didn't do it," Peter insisted.

"The evidence was piling up," Mike Shayne continued. "Still it didn't satisfy me. There was other evidence that didn't quite fit the pattern. For instance somebody hired a private detective named Charlie Smith to follow me. Charlie said he didn't know who it was, and that he was being paid in old gold coins. I think he was, but I think he had been hired a long while before I came on the case. I started to look for someone who knew things only Charlie could have told him.

"I got a good hard look at Peter too. I saw how much he loved his family and his girl. A man like Peter might kill for love, but only kill someone he hated or a stranger. I didn't think he would kill his own family, because he loved them, too.

"That was what made it hard to look at anyone in this family as a murderer. It wasn't logical or rational. That was the key all right. I had to look for a killer who wasn't really rational."

He saw comprehension begin to dawn in the faces of both Peter and Roberta Henderson.

Peter said: "Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes," Mike Shayne said. "There is only one person in this household who really isn't rational. That person is smart. He's even intelligent. He was clever enough to plan all the things that happened and active enough to put his plans into execution. He's all those things—but he isn't rational. He could decide to kill."

By that time they all realized who he was talking about.

"You gave me the clue before I recognized it," Mike Shayne said. "You all told me he wasn't rational but I didn't realize what it meant then any more than you did."

"I had no motive," Gramps said from his chair. His hands gripped the chair arms till his knuckles had turned white. "No motive at all," he said.

"Of course you had a motive," Mike Shayne said. "Nobody kills without a motive. Peter—did you ever tell your grandfather about your girl?"

"No. I didn't tell anyone till I told Mother just a little while ago."

"He knew though," Shayne said. "Charlie found out for him and told him. He loved you and he knew you had trouble and he hired Charlie to find out

what it was. Then he decided to solve it for you in the only way he could."

"It was my money," Gramps said. "I could decide who would inherit my money. A man has a right to decide that."

"Not the way you tried to do it," Mike Shayne said. "Not by killing off all the other heirs. That was your plan, wasn't it? You knew that none of the money was in your name to dispose of. That's why you had to pay off Charlie Smith in a collection of old gold coins. You loved Peter more than all the rest of them and this was the only way you could help him. You killed for love. That's the way it was."

"That's the way it was," Gramps Henderson said. "I loved him more than all the rest of them together."

For the first time since Mike Shayne had met him the old man looked every day of his age.

Then suddenly the inner fire seemed to blaze up within him again. The eyes which had shown the vague questing of old age became keen and savage. His lips pulled back away from his teeth.

"Peter is my boy," he told them all. "The only one of the lot worth living. I want him to have the money and he shall. You know my secret—so now

what matter if I finish the job. You'll see."

He reached under the cushion of the chair where he sat and came up with a pistol, the same gun he had fired at Shayne and his daughter-in-law only minutes before.

"Here we go," he said. "One by one."

He started to raise the gun. Triumph and savage hatred flared in his face—and then suddenly the face went white and strained.

His eyes rolled back to show the whites and the gun fell from limp fingers. The old heart had failed.

Gramps Henderson fell back into the chair—dead before anyone realized what had occurred.

"WHAT are they going to do, Michael?" Lucy Hamilton asked her big boss the next morning. "Have they called the Beach Police?"

"No," Mike Shayne said.

"They haven't done that yet, Angel, and I don't really think they will. After all the death of young Frank is down as accident. They're a close knit family, and he was a very old man. Why blacken his memory now?"

"What happened to the girl Alice."

"She walked back into Doc Kane's place about an hour after he called me. The whole family is going to see that she gets the best of care. I hope she makes it."

"So do I," Lucy Hamilton said. "So that rings down the curtain."

"Not quite, Angel," Mike Shayne said. "I still have to have a word with Charlie. He's going to turn back those coins or the extra dough he got for them. It's not right to take advantage of an old man like he did."

Shayne and Lucy Hamilton smiled at each other across the office.

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RETURN TO MURDER

Nothing in the small town seemed to have changed over the years, except that the professor's young wife was dead—and someone called it murder!

by **PATTY BRISCO**



WHEN DUNCAN, my secretary, told me that a Dr. John Lawson was in my outer office, it took me a moment to place the name. After all, twenty five years is a long time. When I finally made the connection, I was knee-deep in memories.

Professor John Lawson had been my favorite teacher at Blanton College. I wondered if it was the same Dr. Lawson, and if it was, what he could possibly want to see me about.

My curiosity in full flower, I told Duncan to show him in.

Dunc grinned at me. "Why, Boss," he said. "You look positively flustered. Just who is this Lawson character?"

I gave him my very best scowl, which doesn't fool either of us. Blanton was still a tender spot with me, and it bothered me that it showed.

"None of your business, Boyo. Just do what you're paid to do, and show the gentleman in," I snapped.

Duncan saluted smartly, and closed the door after himself. One of the advantages of being the boss is that I can hire the kind of secretary I want. What I don't need is some little flit in a mini-skirt shaking up the male staff members and making me look bad. Duncan really performs the services of an Administrative Assistant, but

Featuring

DETECTIVE MARY CASSIDY



it amuses us both to call him my secretary.

The door opened, and a tall, grey haired man stepped into the room. It was Dr. Lawson. Twenty five years had frosted his hair and bent his shoulders slightly, but the fine-hewn face was still attractive, and the blue eyes still had sparkle.

I stood up, wondering if he would recognize me. When he saw me, his face crinkled into a wide smile.

"Mary! Mary Cassidy!"

He came toward me with hands outstretched. I reached out and took them. He looked at me long and hard.

"The years have been good to you," he said. "You've changed surprisingly little since you left Blanton."

I shrugged. "There's not much time can do to a face like mine, I'm afraid," I said, retrieving my hands. "What brings you so far away from home? Business, or pleasure?"

The smile faded from his face, and I could see the effect of the years in the blurred line of his jaw, and the deep lines around his eyes and mouth.

"It's business, Mary. You see, I have need of the type of service you offer."

That surprised me.

I motioned him to a chair, and sat down behind my desk. "How did you know where I

was, and what business I'm in?"

"Oh, we've kept track, Mary. Maybe you've forgotten us, but we haven't forgotten you."

I had the good grace to feel chagrined. It was true that I had not kept up correspondence, even with my closest friends in Blanton.

"Do you remember that article they did on you when you were involved in that fraud case?"

I nodded.

"Well, it appeared in the *Blanton Sentinel*. Since then I've made it a point to keep track. I always considered you an exceptional girl, Mary. I made a mental note that if I should ever require the services of a private detective, I should call on you."

"Well," I said, feeling slightly uncomfortable. "I guess I had been so anxious to forget Blanton, that I had assumed that they had forgotten me."

"I need help, Mary. In fact, I don't think that anyone else could do the job I'm asking you to do."

Suddenly, I became wary. "Just what is this job, Dr. Lawson?"

"It's my wife," he said simply, but there was a weight of sorrow and hopelessness in the words.

There was a pause while I

digested this information. I remembered his wife. She was the eldest daughter of one of the town's oldest families; a tall, willowy woman, who looked as if she was separated from the world by a curtain of fine gauze.

Professor Lawson used to have a custom of holding Sunday afternoon salons, where we drank tea, ate cookies, and discussed matters of profound meaning. Mrs. Lawson had presided over the teapot at these meetings. I liked her, because she never made me feel gawky, or unlovely, as many pretty women did. But she must be near the professor's age. Surely the problem could not be infidelity.

Professor Lawson must have read my face. "That's right, you don't know, do you? It's not Greta, my first wife; she and I were divorced two years ago. Soon after the divorce was final, I married again. A good friend of yours, Betty Harding, you remember her?"

To say that I was surprised was an understatement. I did not know quite what to say, and he must have sensed this.

"It caused a bit of a furor, Mary. You know how Blanton is. Many of our friends, I'm sure, thought me a real cad in the truest old-fashioned meaning of the word."

"You don't have to explain anything to me," I said.

"But I do, Mary. I want you to understand. All those years with Greta, I was never happy, never. It was like living with a marble statue, but I had made my bargain, and tried to live with it. Then one day, I decided that whatever remaining years were left to me, I deserved some happiness, a right to life and love. I make no apologies for what I did."

I nodded. "I can understand that. What I don't understand is the problem. Why do you think you need a private detective?"

"Betty's dead, Mary."

For a moment his face was naked and vulnerable, as the words hung there between us.

I broke the silence. "How did it happen?"

"The police say it was suicide."

"But you don't believe that?"

"No! Not for one single minute do I believe it."

My mind resumed functioning at normal speed. "Have the police closed the case?"

"Yes. I virtually pleaded with Harry Carter, but he said that in the face of the evidence, it was the only thing they could do."

A hammer struck me forcibly just below my breast bone. Harry Carter! How long had it

been since I had thought of that name! How long had it been that I had carefully avoided thinking of that name.

"Then Harry Carter is Blanton's Chief of Police now?"

"Oh, that's right. You knew Harry pretty well, didn't you."

"Yes," I said. "I knew him. Now, if the police have closed the case because the only evidence points to suicide, what is it that you want me to do?"

"I want you to investigate her death. Once the police decided it was suicide, they didn't look very hard in any other direction. I want you to see if you can find something they missed. You knew Betty; you were her friend. If you came back to Blanton for a visit, no one would see anything unusual in that. It wouldn't be like bringing in a stranger to poke about."

So I found myself, on a brilliant day in late summer, standing on the postage-stamp landing field at Blanton, waiting for a taxi to take me into town.

As I stood there, I could not help thinking about that time, twenty-five years ago, when I decided to leave Blanton to make my way in the world.

What can you say about a woman who is almost wealthy, and very successful. A woman who is respected by her peers,

has considerable power, and is happy in her chosen work.

Well, you can start off by saying that she was once known as "Ugly Mary".

Some skinny kid in Blanton hung that name on me when I was just a kid myself. Sounds sad, doesn't it?

But I am known as one tough dame, and I had some of the toughness even then. I faced the fact that nothing was going to help the way I looked. No hair tints, face creams, makeup, or false eyelashes were going to make my face pretty. No girdles or uplift bras were going to camouflage my sturdy figure. There I was, in the all too solid flesh, and that was the face and body I was stuck with.

Even so, I had my moments. One of those moments was Harry Carter; a big, broad-shouldered, athletic boy, he enjoyed the fact that I could offer him real competition at sports. I didn't realize how deeply I was beginning to care for him, until we got to college.

About the time I was making this discovery, he was making a discovery of his own. Millie Stanton, a slim, vacant-eyed blond, with an outstanding superstructure. She batted her big, round eyes, and shook her big... Well, it doesn't matter now, but at the time it hurt

plenty, enough for me to leave Blanton and never want to see it, or Harry Carter, again.

When I decided to leave Blanton, I took stock. I didn't have looks, so what did I have? I had a good mind, and I was physically strong. I had excellent health and boundless energy to work toward any goal I desired.

I looked the job field over carefully, picked out a profession that I thought I might enjoy; and worked hard to be as good as anybody in that field.

Today, I own the biggest detective agency in the city, the U.M.C. Agency. Everyone knows that the M.C. stands for Mary Cassidy, but no one but myself knows what the U. stands for.

A TAXI BRAKED to a stop in front of me, throwing up a cloud of yellow dust into the clear summer air. I smiled at the driver and got in.

I had forgotten what a pretty, little town Blanton was. The tree lined streets looked cool and peaceful. Most of the houses were old, with the comfortable patina that comes with peaceful years and good care. Through the open windows of the cab, I could hear the sounds of barking dogs and laughing children. I settled back into the seat, and mentally turned over



the information that Dr. Lawson had given me.

Betty Lawson had been found in the Bide-a-Wee Motel, at twelve-thirty p.m., on a Wednesday afternoon, by Mrs. Watkins, the manager of the motel.

Mrs. Watkins reported that Betty had checked into the motel the day before, at two p.m., and insisted on paying in advance. When Betty's car was still there the following afternoon, after check out time, and when Betty did not answer the door, Mrs. Watkins entered with her pass key. Betty was on the sofa, dead.

The local police, when they

arrived with the medical examiner, corroborated this fact. Betty Lawson had been dead for at least nineteen hours.

There was a suicide note, found under an empty pill bottle. The bottle bore the name of a local pharmacy, the prescription was in Betty's name.

All the evidence pointed to suicide. The note had been written on a typewriter in the Lawson study. The pharmacist verified filling the prescription for Betty. Betty's doctor verified the fact that he had prescribed the sleeping pills for which the prescription called, and the autopsy showed that she had died from an overdose of those same pills.

All the hard evidence pointed one way. Despite the fact Betty had been in an excellent mood the morning before, Dr. Lawson had nothing going for his belief that it could not have been suicide—except his own knowledge of Betty, her moods and her feelings. That and the fact that Betty had a fear of oral medication, and could not be made to swallow a pill in any shape or form.

The cab rolled to a stop in front of the Blanton Arms, which used to be the best hotel in town. It looked as if it still was.

Once in my room, I had a nice, hot shower, then settled

down to deciding on a plan of action.

Dr. Lawson's review of the case was, I felt sure, relatively factual; but he was not a professional. I would need to see the police files, *ergo*, I would need to see my old friend/enemy Harry Carter. Although I wondered what it would be like to see him again, I decided to hit the library's newspaper morgue first to see what the local press had had to say about the case.

I had dinner in the Blanton Arms—it wasn't bad—then walked over to the Library.

The Library was not the same. The small, ivy covered building I remembered had been replaced by a large, very modern building. Only the smell was the same; the faintly dry and bookish odor that permeates all libraries, whether old or new.

The newspaper accounts told a story almost identical with the story Dr. Lawson had told me. There were pictures of Betty taken shortly before her death; a pleasant faced, gentle looking woman. I could still see the girl I remembered in the halo of soft light hair, although the face was fuller, and more mature than the face I had known. I looked at the pictures for a long time, trying to imagine what, or who, could have

led her to her death in a dingy motel room.

As I left the library, bemused and only half aware, I almost ran into a woman coming in. As I looked up to apologize for my carelessness, I gazed full into the face of Dr. Lawson's ex-wife, Greta.

Her delicate, familiar, fine-boned face showed not a flicker of surprise. She might have seen me only yesterday.

"Why, Mary Cassidy," she said. "It's been a very long time. It's nice to see you again. How are you?"

"Just fine," I said, noticing the fine network of wrinkles that covered her face like an overlay of spider web.

She was rummaging in her large handbag. "You must come to tea," she said, handing me a small, white card. "This is the address. Come about three, on Sunday?"

"I'd be delighted."

"Good."

She turned away from me and continued on into the building. I stood looking after her. She certainly hadn't seemed surprised to see me, in fact, her behavior could be classed as a bit odd. She had always been a sort of "other worldly" person. I couldn't help but wonder if the shock of the divorce might not have thrown her a little off balance. Still, it

was lucky meeting her like this, accidentally. It would make talking to her easier.

IT DIDN'T take any great effort to find out where my old school friend, Harry Carter, ate lunch.

Exactly at twelve o'clock the next day, I was in the Baker's Dozen Lunch Room. I took a booth right in front of the door, so that Harry couldn't possibly miss me as he came in. To my annoyance, I felt nervous and keyed up. It would seem to me that twenty five years would be plenty of insulation against the pain of a broken heart; but then, I guess an old wound can cause a twinge, no matter how well it is covered with scars.

I was drinking coffee, and looking at a sandwich that I really didn't want, as he came through the door.

Unlike Greta Lawson, Harry was surprised to see me. It even took him a minute or two to place the face. When he did, his expression was comical.

"Well," he said, when he was seated opposite me in the booth. "What brings you back to town, after all these years?"

I made a face, and shrugged. "You know how it is. At some point in time we all want to go home again, just to see if the old place is like we remember it."

"And is it?" he asked, bemused.

"Pretty much. I guess I'm surprised that so many of the people I knew are still around."

Harry was heavier than I remembered him. He had become a huge, wide-shouldered man. His heavy black hair had thinned to a semi-circle around his well shaped head; I was almost sorry to see that it became him. His eyes were steady and friendly. I felt a sort of shallow annoyance that he had not grown flabby and unattractive.

"You look good," he said.

"I was no beauty twenty-five years ago. I guess there isn't much that time can do to me."

He looked concerned. "Hey, don't knock yourself. You've worn well! Hell! You should see some of the beauty queens we went to school with. Besides, you always had something more than a pretty face. I'll bet you never knew that I was more than a little in awe of you."

I looked at him warily. "You're kidding."

He shook his head. "No. You were always so darned bright."

He was looking at me steadily, and I began to feel very uneasy.

"How's your wife?"

He was still looking at me with the same steady expression.

"Millie died four years ago, a heart attack."

I felt deeply embarrassed.

"I'm sorry." And then, because I did not know what else to say, "She was very pretty."

He shrugged. "She weighed two hundred and eighty pounds when she died. It helped kill her."

I decided that it was time to get down to what I had come for. The present conversation was getting very uncomfortable for me.

"I heard that Betty died, too. I was... shocked."

Harry shook his head. "A terrible thing. It sure was hard on old professor Lawson. Despite the difference in their ages, they seemed as happy as clams. I can't figure for the life of me why she did it."

"Then you are convinced that she did do it?"

He looked at me with surprise.

"Of course. There was no other conclusion to come to." His eyes narrowed. "Why?"

I shrugged. "I just wondered. I used to know Betty very well, and you're right. It's hard to imagine her doing such a thing. But it's been a long time. Maybe she changed."

"Not really." Harry played with the handle of his coffee cup. "She was about the same as she had always been. But

you never really can know about people. Even people as close as husbands or wives."

I leaned forward. "Harry, as a personal favor to me, would you let me see the files on the case?"

He looked at me warily. "Yeah, that's right, you own a detective agency, don't you. I heard about it. Why do you want to look at the files? The case is closed."

"Betty was my friend."

He ground out his cigarette in the saucer. "All right, Mary. For old time's sake."

Somehow, I wished he hadn't put it that way.

The police records of the case were thoroughly and efficiently done. Blanton might be a small town, but the police force knew its business. I went over the file with everything but a magnifying glass. Although I'm used to such things, the photos were pretty upsetting. There were several shots of Betty as they had found her; sprawled across a small sofa; skirt rumpled, hair mussed, limbs lax. I know such pictures serve a purpose, but some part of me still considers them the most flagrant invasion of privacy.

Something about the pictures, other than the mere fact of their existance, bothered me. I placed them back in their folder. Whatever it was, it would

come to me in time. I had learned not to push these things.

I thanked Harry for the use of his files, and surprised myself by agreeing to have dinner with him the following night. Was this the strong minded woman who had promised herself that she would coolly reject any offer of friendship from her once unfaithful ex-sweetheart?

In the meantime, I decided I ought to see Lawson now.

Dr. Lawson still lived in the old, two story, frame house near the college campus. The house had a sedate look, like a kindly dowager aunt, well painted and carrying her age comfortably.

The door was opened by an elderly, medium sized man, with a thatch of unruly salt-and-pepper hair, and strange eyes. The only things I recognized were the eyes.

"Gerald?" I said.

The strange eyes looked at me unblinkingly. "Why, yes, Miss Cassidy. Of course."

"Pardon me, Gerald. It's just that I guess I'm surprised to still find you here."

I certainly was. I had forgotten him entirely. If I had thought of him, I should have assumed that he had gone on to live his own life somewhere. Gerald was Dr. Lawson's brother. He had lived with Dr.

Lawson and Greta for several years. He was a totally forgettable man except for his unusual eyes.

"Yes, I'm still here, Miss Cassidy."

The tone of his voice made me realize that I had perhaps not phrased my remark in the most diplomatic way.

"Come in. John is expecting you."

Dr. Lawson turned from his desk to face me. "Mary. You came. Thank you, my dear. Thank you very much."

"Don't thank me yet. There may be nothing I can do, nothing to find out."

He shook his head. "If, when you are finished with your investigation, you believe that Betty's death was suicide, then perhaps I will be able to accept it too."

I hesitated. "That's an awful responsibility," I said.

He smiled. "You're a strong girl, Mary. You always were. I wonder if you know how much the other students admired you, and looked up to you."

"Admired me?" I was dumbfounded. If the other students, my friends and acquaintances, had admired me, I had certainly been unaware of it.

"It's quite possible that you were too self engrossed to notice," he said gently. "The young are often somewhat

self-centered. Even the nicest ones."

Gerald came in just then with a huge silver tray. He put down plates of cookies, sugar and cream and lemon. His expression was polite, but remote.

As Gerald poured me a cup of steaming tea, the telephone rang in another part of the house.

Dr. Lawson stood up. "You go on ahead, Gerald. I'll get it. Excuse me, Mary."

He left the room, as Gerald poured himself a tea and sat down opposite me.

"I'm very sorry about Betty. It was a terrible thing," I said.

"Yes," he said flatly. But something flickered in back of his pale eyes.

The secret look on his face made me curious, and I decided to probe a bit. "Did you like Betty? Did you get on well with her?"

He looked up at me over the tea cup. "I am only a guest in this house," he said. "It's not my place to like or dislike any of John's wives." His tone was restrained, but there was considerable malice behind it. Oh! I thought.

"She was really very young to die," I said quietly.

His thin lips tightened. "Yes," he said. "She was much younger than John. I suppose that's why she found it so easy

to take him away from Greta."

"But surely she didn't take Dr. Lawson away from his first wife. Dr. Lawson told me himself that he and Greta had been unhappy for years."

"Greta was a saint," said Gerald firmly, just as his brother reentered the room.

When we had all finished our tea, Gerald put the tea things back onto the tray, and left the room. I turned to Dr. Lawson.

"I get the feeling that Gerald didn't exactly care for Betty."

Dr. Lawson rubbed his hand over his face. "I don't really know why. I suppose it's because he and Greta got on so well, and he feels that I betrayed her. He seemed to see Betty as some sort of *femme fatale*, which of course was ridiculous."

"Yes," I said, wondering if Gerald disliked Betty enough to kill her. "I'm surprised to see him still living with you. I would have thought he would have gotten married by now."

Dr. Lawson smiled. "I guess you never knew, Mary, but Gerald is not really competent to face marriage, or any other situation that might demand too much of him. He's, well... a misfit, I guess you might say."

"I'm sorry," I said. I felt angry with myself. It seemed like I had been putting my foot in my mouth all day.

I stood up. "Well, if I'm going to do the job you hired me for, I had better get on with it. I'm going out to see Mrs. Watkins, the motel manager, this afternoon."

"Call me as soon as you know anything."

"I will," I promised. I said goodbye, and went to my car.

As I pulled away from the curb, I turned and looked back. Still at the door, Dr. Lawson looked bent and old, and I wondered if this thing wasn't doing him too much harm.

There was a flicker of movement at one of the upstairs windows, and I thought I saw Gerald Lawson's face between the fluttering white curtains.

MRS. WATKINS was a brittle, twig-like woman; frail looking as a doll fashioned of sticks and cloth, but evidently as strong as a horse. She managed, cleaned, and repaired the rooms at the Bide-a-Wee Motel, all by herself.

I had no difficulty getting her to talk, but it was the same story. Dishearteningly the same. If I was going to accomplish anything, I knew that I had to come up with something new. Something that the police had missed. At my request Mrs. Watkins showed me to Betty's room.

It was nondescript and

stereotyped. It might have been any one of a thousand, anywhere in the world. I sat on the sofa, where my friend had lain sprawled inelegantly in death, and as I sat there, I realized what had bothered me about the pictures in the police files.

I decided to confirm my suspicions later. First, I had a date with Harry Carter, and unless I hurried, I would be late.

Despite my apprehensions, I enjoyed my dinner with Harry more than I cared to admit, even to myself. He took me to a quiet little place that was new to me, "The Golden Egg". It was run by an earnest young couple, and the food was both ample and excellent.

Harry looked after the young wife, as she walked away after filling our wine glasses. "Do you ever wish you were that age again, Mary?"

"Lord no!" I laughed. The words carried more impetus than I had intended. "Those were the unhappiest years of my life. I wouldn't go back to them if I could."

Harry Carter put his heavy, warm hand over mine. "I've often wished that I had. . ."

I pulled my hand away, feeling my face grow warm. "Let's not talk about old times, if you don't mind, Harry."

He looked disappointed and unhappy. "All right, Mary. But

someday you'll let me talk to you."

"Sure," I said. "Someday". We left it at that, and he drove me back to my hotel.

The next day was Sunday at the Lawson's, but it wasn't "The Lawson's" any longer, and the small, frame house with the rose vine over the door was not the rambling, old Lawson house.

Greta showed me in politely. The house was almost depressingly neat and smelled of dried rose petals. Greta was wearing a long, white dress. It looked like the ones she used to wear so long ago.

She brought out a tea service that might have been a twin to the one that the professor had. I wondered if anyone in this town drank anything stronger than tea, but I accepted a cup, with lemon, and smiled politely.

"It's so nice to see you again, Mary. What brings you back to Blanton after so long?"

"Curiosity, I guess."

"How do you find the town, after so long a time?"

"Changed, but not as much as I might have expected. I was very sorry to hear about Betty's death."

Greta's face showed nothing. I had expected her to react in some way. Surprise, shock that I would mention the subject,

even anger. But there was nothing.

At that moment a beautiful, long haired Persian cat walked into the room.

Greta raised her eyes to mine, and they were quite expressionless. "My cat, Serendipity."

"He's very beautiful," I said. But I was recalling the only time I had ever seen Greta Lawson show anger.

She had owned a cat then, too. A sleek, grey tabby, called Grimalkin. One Sunday, when Betty and I were visiting the Lawson's, one of the college professors, driving rather faster than was sensible or legal, ran over the cat. Greta had become a regular fury; hounding the man until he had virtually left town to escape her wrath.

"Do you remember Grimalkin?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "I do. I do indeed."

When our little visit was over, I gratefully escaped into the cooling evening air. I decided to walk. The fresh air would wash the scent of rose petals from my nose and mouth.

At the corner of Third and Elm, I stepped into the street without really looking where I was going. It was very nearly my last step.

A small, nondescript green



car came squealing around the corner and almost flattened me. If my reflexes had been in as bad a shape as my powers of observation, I would have been hit. Feeling a little shaken, I stepped back onto the curb. I caught a quick glimpse of the back of the car turning the next corner. I didn't have time to get the license number, and I had not really gotten a look at the driver, except that I had the impression that it was a man.

The next morning, early, I paid a visit to Betty's doctor. He was an elderly, peppery man, impatient at being bothered, but too polite to tell me to get out.

Yes, he had prescribed the

sleeping pills. On July fifteenth, to be exact. The police had already verified that.

It was then that I finally got lucky. I was feeling more than a little down, and beginning to think that I would never uncover anything more than the police had, when I asked the right question.

"I know a Doctor's confidence is privileged, but could you tell me if she appeared worried, or upset when she saw you that day?"

He peered at the slip in his hand. "Didn't see her that day."

"But you said that you gave her a prescription."

"Called it in."

"You mean that she made a call to you, and then you called the prescription in to the pharmacy?"

"Yes. I often do that for patients I know well. It's a common procedure."

"Thank you, Doctor," I said. "Thank you very much."

So here it was. The missing piece. The police had only asked the doctor if he had prescribed the medication, and he had answered them truthfully. He had. Since they were already convinced that it was suicide, they did not take it any further.

A quick visit to the pharmacy where the prescription had been filled, verified the fact

that Betty had not picked up the prescription, but had called in and asked to have it delivered to the house, and left in the mail box as "no one would be home".

By noon I was back in my hotel room, trying to put the pieces together. Someone, not Betty, had called her doctor, telling him something about not sleeping well, and asking him for a prescription. Someone who could sound reasonably like Betty. This same person had called the pharmacy and asked to have the pills delivered at a time when they knew the Lawsons would not be home. Therefore, it must be someone who knew the Lawson's schedule pretty well. All he or she had to do then was pick up the pills from the mailbox.

It would not have been too difficult to get Betty to the Bide-a-Wee motel. All the killer would have had to do was to call Betty and tell her that her husband was in trouble, or something of the sort. Betty had always been the trusting kind.

Once Betty was at the motel, the killer had gotten the pills down her, perhaps at gunpoint. And it was all over but for the cleaning up.

Then there was the note, typed on a machine from the

Lawson home, but unsigned, I reminded myself.

But who could have wanted Betty dead? John Lawson's brother, Gerald? Greta, Lawson's ex-wife? Or perhaps John Lawson, himself.

I lay down on my bed and went carefully over every incident and every conversation I had participated in since I had arrived in Blanton. When I was through, I thought that I knew who had killed my friend. However, there was not a shred of evidence. I had to prove it.

At that moment the phone rang. There was a long silence after I said hello. When my caller finally spoke, it was with an obviously disguised voice. I could not tell if it was male or female.

"Do you want to find out what happened to your friend?"

"Yes," I said clearly.

"Then come to old Mill Pond, in an hour. Come alone."

"I'll be there," I said. The earpiece clicked softly, and I put the phone down thoughtfully.

Now, should I call Harry? One of the first things I teach my operatives is "Never go into a potentially dangerous situation alone." Yet, here I was, considering violating my own rule. Finally good sense prevailed and I called the station, only to find out that Harry

Carter was out of town for the day on business and would not be back until late the next day. I could call the station anyway, but that would mean talking to some young cop who knew nothing about what was going on, and the explanations would take longer than a census in hell.

IT WAS A beautiful afternoon. One of those clear, Indian Summer days that make you think that time has stopped for a moment. I drove my rented car over the washboarded road, cursing at every snap of my vertebrae.

The pond was just as I remembered it. Clear and blue, with pussy-willows and cattails fringing in like false eyelashes, and surrounded by ancient twisted oak trees. I parked the car just off the road, and gingerly walked the narrow dirt path that circles the pond. There was not another human being in sight. Bees droned, birds sang, and everything smelled clean and very healthy. My hand, in my pocket, rested on my little derringer. It was a comfort.

Then I saw the movement. I stepped behind an oak, and shaded my eyes with my hand. There was someone there in the clearing to my left. I moved carefully and quietly, and

looked through the leaves. Then I breathed a sigh of relief. It was only Greta.

She was seated on a canvas camp stool in front of an easel. She was wearing a voluminous painter's smock over her dress and she looked relaxed and happy.

I walked toward her, as if I were out for an afternoon stroll.

She looked up as I approached, shielding her eyes with an almost transparent hand.

"Why Mary, what on earth are you doing way out here?"

"I came out to meet someone, but it looks as if they aren't here yet."

I watched her face closely, but there was not a flicker of expression. She had the original poker face.

"Do you come out here often to paint?"

She smiled, not taking her eyes off of the canvas in front of her. "Why yes. Several times a week, in fact.

"Do many people know that?"

"Why, Mary, what a strange question! Yes, I suppose so. I don't keep it a secret, you know."

I felt decidedly uneasy. Could I be wrong about the identity of the murderer?

"Come Mary, sit down and keep me company. There's lunch in that hamper to your

right, and juice in the large thermos, if you're thirsty."

I sat down on a large, sun-warmed stone and watched her lay out her picture. She seemed to have a good sense of design.

"I think I'll have some of that juice," I said, reaching for the thermos.

"Fine. Help yourself. It's nice and cold. I put in lots of ice."

I unscrewed the cap of the thermos and poured a cup full of purple, fruity smelling liquid. "Do you want a cup?"

"Yes please, if you would."

I poured her a cup and set it beside her on the grass.

The sun was hot, the air sweet, and the humming of insects was very relaxing. I looked up and saw Greta looking down at me.

"You look drowsy," Greta said. "Why don't you lie down for a nice little nap? I'll be through here in a minute or so, and then we can have lunch. It doesn't look as if the person you were going to meet is going to show up."

I *was* drowsy. It had been a very busy day. "Just for a moment," I said, and yawned. I lay down on the edge of her blanket, and closed my eyes.

For a few moments, I heard the soft sounds of paint brush on canvas. Then silence. I felt a touch, light as a puff of breeze. "Mary! Are you awake? Mary!"

I concentrated on breathing evenly, and did not answer.

"Mary?" This time the touch was stronger, and I could hear Greta's breath now, coming in gasps, as if she had been running.

Then someone had hold of my ankles, firmly, and I felt myself being dragged off of the blanket, onto the weeds and dirt.

I flipped over, opened my eyes, and sat up, at the same time drawing my little deringer out from beneath me, where I had placed it when I lay down.

Greta's face was white with shock. Her eyes were dark, and had a crazed expression. She was bent over, her thin hands about my ankles; stopped in the process of dragging me toward the edge of the pond.

"Don't look so startled," I said softly. "I didn't drink the juice, I poured it on the ground."

She loosed her hold on my ankles, and stood up slowly. By the time she was upright, she was again the perfect lady.

"Was I supposed to be found drowned, Greta? Was the same thing in the fruit juice that you put in Greta's drink? Were you going to tell them how I fell into the pond, and how you tried to save me?"

"I'm sorry, Mary. But it was necessary. You were too curi-

ous, and you have always been too smart. You would have found out."

I got slowly to my feet, keeping the gun aimed at her midriff.

"Did Gerald help you, Greta?"

She shook her head. "He borrowed the typewriter for me, but he didn't know what it was for. I found out that he tried to frighten you with his car, but that was because he sensed you were some sort of danger to me. He didn't mean to hurt you, only frighten you."

She looked at me, and her eyes were completely honest.

"I didn't want to hurt you, Mary. I would like you to know that."

I felt a great sadness. "I know, Greta," I said. "I know."

THE GOLDEN EGG was nearly empty, as Harry Carter and I sat over our postprandial brandies.

He raised his glass to mine. "To you, Mary. I suppose I should be embarrassed, or angry about all this, and I guess I am, a little; embarrassed anyway. No one likes somebody else coming into their territory and taking care of something they should have taken care of themselves. But I'm not angry. You're a hell of a good cop, and I wish I had

you on the force, working for me."

I smiled. I was feeling good. "I'll accept that as a compliment, Harry, even though in my own territory, I'm the boss."

He laughed, a booming laugh that echoed around the room. It takes a good man to be generous about something like this. And Harry had always been a good man.

"Tell me one thing," he said. "What made you so certain that it wasn't suicide, because if you hadn't thought that it wasn't suicide, you never would have pursued it?"

"Call it intuition," I said. "You remember Betty, how pretty, how well groomed, she always was."

He nodded. "Sure."

"It was those pictures in your files, showing Betty with no make-up and her hair not combed. It's been my experience that a woman contemplating suicide, unless she is in a deep depression, and I think we established that Betty was not, will put on full make-up and her prettiest dress. She doesn't want to be caught looking unattractive, even—or maybe particularly—when she is dead."

Harry Carter put his large, heavy hand over mine, and smiled into my eyes.

"Mary," he said. "You're beautiful."

I felt a soft, warm feeling under my breastbone, because I knew how he meant the words, and I could accept them.

KICKING OFF the New Year in the January Issue:

THE MURDER BOWL

The New Complete MIKE SHAYNE Short Novel

by BRETT HALLIDAY

For detective Mike Shayne, the Bowl game in Miami was just the background for a deadlier set of plays. The score was against the redhead from the start, and he had little time to make his play . . . and even less time to learn what the rules were — or even who refereed.

An Old Fashioned Girl

by CHARLES E. FRITCH

A rose by any other name
would smell as sweet, and
have as many thorns...



"YOU CAN'T imagine what a terrible burden it is to have a name like mine," Jack D. Ripper said. "People expect me to be some kind of horrible monster."

"You could change it," Lucy Berger suggested. "Name changing is quite common. If I had a name I didn't like, I'd change it for another."

The name certainly didn't fit him, she decided. He was middle-aged, slight of build, just a trifle paunchy, with thinning blonde hair and a mushroom nose. Not handsome, but pleasant, comfortable looking. His clothes, too, were quite conventional, not in the least intimidating. A tweedy sort one might expect of a bank teller in a small town.

"To tell the truth, I'd never thought of changing it. That's odd, I suppose, because it does seem the sensible thing to do. But then I've had the name so long I'm sure I'd have difficulty adjusting to another."

"I read an article once," Lucy said brightly, "that said names have an effect upon a person's personality. Someone named Mike or Steve, for example would *tend* to be strong and manly, possibly to live up to his name. And a person named Percy or Bruce would be the opposite."

Jack D. Ripper laughed. "Well, I can assure you, it didn't happen in my case."

"A good thing, too," Lucy said, joining him in his laughter. "I certainly wouldn't feel comfortable alone in the same room with a killer." She leaned over the coffee table. "More tea?"

"Yes, please." As she took the gleaming silver teapot and

poured brown liquid into his cup, her massive ring caught his eye and he said, "Say, that's certainly a good-looking ring. Where did you get it?"

Seeming pleased by the attention, Lucy extended her hand. "It's been in my family for generations. Do you really like it?"

Taking her hand in his, he examined the gold ring with its intricate design set into the head. He smiled to himself. Was it his imagination, or did her slim, delicate fingers flutter ever so slightly in his grasp?

"Yes, indeed, very impressive." He released her and picked up his cup. "But then you're a very impressive person yourself, Lucy."

He grinned into his cup as she blushed prettily and averted her gaze from his. Actually, for a middle-aged woman, she wasn't bad at all—and if the ring and this living room were any indication, she had enough antiques to give him a comfortable nest egg. Probably even had money cached away somewhere in the house.

"To tell you the truth," he went on, "I was expecting someone quite different."

Her face showed concern. "You're not disappointed, I hope."

"Far from it, my dear," he assured her. "But your ad men-

tioned a lonely widow, and I was afraid you might be someone disagreeable. I'm delighted to find that you're a witty, charming, and thoroughly attractive lady."

"And very old-fashioned and sentimental, I'm afraid," she said self-consciously, her eyes darting about the room with a trace of apology.

"My mother was old-fashioned and sentimental, too," he said, smiling warmly at her, but not adding that it was one of the many reasons he'd hated his mother.

His gaze made her blush again. To change the subject, she said, "You don't have any family at all?"

He sighed. "No. Like you, I live alone. I read a lot, but that's no replacement for companionship."

"No, no it isn't," she said quickly—too quickly perhaps, she thought, for after all, she mustn't seem too eager with this very nice middle-aged man who was very polite but who was nevertheless a complete stranger to her. "Would you care for some wine?"

"I'd love some," he told her.

Lucy rose from the couch and walked across the ornately furnished living room to a large glass-fronted cabinet set against the far wall. She swung open one of the doors and took

from a shelf a large cut glass decanter half filled with liquid the color of blood, along with two similarly styled goblets, all of which she brought back to the couch where they sat.

Jack D. Ripper studied her as she moved. She was thin beneath the simple but stylish dress, but there was a suppleness to her body, a lithe sinuousness to her movements. Even so, it would be no trick to overpower her. Despite his seeming frailty, he was quite strong, especially in his hands. His fingers could seize and choke and not release until their purpose was accomplished.

His eyes flashed again to her ring. It was a beauty. When he held her hand he had examined it closely, brushed his fingertips against the metal. It seemed tight on her finger, as though it had not been removed for many years. No matter. The knife in his pocket would take care of that.

"This is one of my favorite wines," Lucy told him, pouring the red liquid from decanter to glass. "I hope you like it."

"I'm sure I shall," he said.

She picked up one of the goblets and handed it to him. He touched the glass to hers in a toast. "To life," he said.

She smiled at him over the rim of her glass and then

sipped slowly at the liquid. She had even, white teeth and rich red lips made redder by contact with the wine.

"Do you like it?" she asked him.

"It's delicious," he said, smacking his lips over the last few drops.

"I made it myself," she told him.

"You're not serious!"

"Oh, but I am. It's from an old family recipe." Her eyes sparkled mischievously. "I have many talents to surprise you with."

"I'll bet you do, Lucy," he said with a wry smile.

For all her gentle breeding, he thought triumphantly, she's still a slut—like all women!

It would be a pleasure killing her slowly, watching her face contort with fear and pain, hearing the pleading moans from her tightening throat, as the life's blood ebbed from her sinful body where he had slashed it.

He said, "Aren't you afraid living in this house out in the country? I mean, it's rather isolated, you know. The nearest neighbor must be a mile away."

"I like my privacy. And no, I'm not afraid. I'm just a harmless old widow. I don't have anything anybody would want."

It was a lie, of course. All the sentimental furnishings in the



place were valuable and could be fenced through the proper channels. Why her ring alone would probably bring a hundred dollars. It was nice to know that after the fun of torturing and killing was over, there would be additional profit from his work.

The thought made him grow fidgety, impatient with the small talk that always kept him from his task. His heart started to beat swiftly in anticipation, and sweat gathered all over his body.

"Is something wrong?" Lucy asked, concerned.

"Oh shut up!" he exploded.

Jack D. Ripper passed a hand over his forehead, then smiled

at the shocked look on her face. Her startled eyes followed his movement as he reached slowly into his pocket and withdrew a large folded knife. When he snicked it open, she gasped at the sight of the slim, razor-sharp blade.

He chuckled. "You were perfectly right, my dear, about names influencing a person's personality. All my life I've been obsessed with my name. Jack D. Ripper. Girls laughed at me, mocked me. I wanted to get even with them, and I knew the original Jack the Ripper had the right idea. They were sluts, all of them. They got what they deserved."

"You're crazy," Lucy Berger said calmly, though her face was white.

"That's what the others called me, too—before I killed them."

He lunged forward with the knife, slashing the air near her midriff. She cried out and leaped to her feet to evade him. Laughing, he rose to follow her. Now wide-eyed and intent on the sharp blade, she backed away.

"You can't escape me," he said. "There's nowhere to go. Scream if you want. No one will hear you."

She wet her lips. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to have some fun

with you, Lucy," he said slowly, savoring the thoughts. "I'm going to slice you up. A slice here, another there. I'm in no hurry. I've got plenty of time. Before long, you'll beg me to kill you. And I'll do it, Lucy, with these hands." She touched her throat.

The blood seemed to pump through his veins more strongly than ever. His clothes matted to his body with sweat. His temples throbbed. Now. Now was the time.

He stumbled forward, but Lucy didn't move out of the way this time. He grinned crookedly. "That's it, Lucy, don't fight it. This is the end for you."

She nodded slowly. "Yes, this is the end."

The smile vanished from his face as the numbness struck him full force. His entire body was suddenly paralyzed. The knife fell from limp fingers. He crashed to the floor and lay still.

Lucy Berger's smiling face hovered over him. He could barely keep her in focus even before his eyes fluttered closed. Her voice seemed distant and hollow as it formed the last words Jack D. Ripper would ever hear.

"Of course, I was right about names influencing people. My real name is Lucretia Borgia!"

His favorite weapons were the ice pick, torch, and short-handled axe, but if it was necessary, he would use a gun. There was no weapon too dirty, no cruelty too low, for this heartless, vicious and conscienceless butcher of men—and even hardened gangsters were sickened by—

THE DIRTY KILLINGS of PITTSBURGH PHIL

by DAVID MAZROFF

WHEN THE CANARIES of Murder, Incorporated started to sing, a lot of their melodies concerned Pittsburgh Phil, and the lyrics were straight from the texts of HORROR TALES.

The Connecticut State Police had been puzzled for several years over a particularly heinous crime in which an ex-convict and bootlegger named Al Silverman had been murdered.

Silverman's body was found dangling from a barbed-wire fence in Somers, Conn. He had been stabbed a score of times.

His face had been battered to a bloody pulp. For good measure the killer took delight in castrating his victim.

When the Connecticut cops learned, through the testimony of gang members who had turned state's evidence, of Pittsburgh Phil's techniques in murder they knew at last the name of the man who had killed Silverman.

Pittsburgh Phil's right name was Harry Strauss. He was also called Big Harry and Pep. Strangely enough, considering the manner in which he dis-

A TRUE CRIME Story of America's Most Evil Killer



patched his victims, with a lust for bloodletting, Pittsburgh Phil was immaculate in his dress at all times, to the very point of foppishness.

Moreover, he was clean-cut in appearance, carried his two-hundred pounds in a six-foot frame like a conditioned athlete. If ever there was an enigma, he was it. When he wasn't killing, and he was credited with more than fifty vicious, harrowing, and cold-blooded murders, he was the perfect gentleman.

The heartless killers in the annals of America's criminal history, Frank Nitti, Machine-Gun Jack McGurn, Al Capone, Albert Anastasia, Vincent Mad Dog Coll, were ruthless. Pittsburgh Phil added an insane kind of ebullient delight to the heartlessness in which he murdered men. He roamed the country on assignments from the underworld and his tools were the gun, knife, ice-pick, meat cleaver, and his iron fists.

In the summer of 1937, a notorious Detroit gangster named Harry Millman was marked for assassination. Millman had carried on a feud with a rival gangster named Joe Bommarito for years. The Italian contingent was slowly taking over the rackets in Detroit from the Purple Gang, and

Millman was a thorn in the side of the Italian mob. He was hard-nosed, though, and a little hard to kill.

The local Brothers of the Blunderworld placed a bomb under the hood of Millman's car while he was enjoying himself in the Club Manhattan on Wayne Street in the downtown section of Detroit.

Shortly after midnight, Millman came down from the club and handed his keys to Willie Holmes, the Negro doorman, and asked him to get his car. When Willie Holmes turned on the ignition he turned off his life. The explosion of the bomb ripped his body to shreds, hurling pieces of it as far away as a hundred feet. This was the third attempt that had been made on Millman's life.

Help was needed. A call was made to New York.

"Send us a couple of your best men for a contract," Bommarito requested.

Buchalter replied, "I've got two of the best. Pittsburgh Phil and Happy Maione."

"Send them," was the terse answer.

Maione was a perpetually surly individual, named Happy only because he wasn't.

Pittsburgh Phil and Happy Maione arrived in Detroit three months after the bomb meant

for Millman killed the Negro doorman. Millman had been tailed all that day. Pittsburgh Phil and Happy Maione were told that Millman at the moment was in Boesky's Restaurant on 12th Street and Hazelwood Avenue, a strictly Jewish neighborhood. Boesky's was a delicatessen-restaurant and cocktail lounge and was frequented by businessmen who dined there with their families, and by gamblers, handbook operators, and assorted gangsters who were always on their best behavior in the place.

Shortly after seven o'clock in the evening, Pittsburgh Phil and Happy Maione walked into the cocktail lounge. A car with the motor running and a driver behind the wheel was parked immediately outside the restaurant.

At the bar were Harry Millman and Honey Cohen, a gambler and handbook operator. Pittsburgh Phil and Happy Maione walked straight to where Millman was standing and fired twelve slugs into his body. He fell dead. Cohen was also killed, and four others at the bar were seriously wounded.

Pittsburgh Phil and Happy Maione turned without a word, strolled out of the bar, got into the car and the driver sped away. An hour later Pittsburgh



PITTSBURGH PHIL

Phil and Maione were on plane bound for New York.

What was it in Pittsburgh Phil's background that turned him into a conscienceless, vicious, amoral and atavistic killer? What ancestor in his lineage contributed to his character? Research reveals nothing.

Environmentally, he should have been anything but what he was. He came from a good middle-class Jewish family and grew up in a middle-class neighborhood. He got as far as the eighth grade in school and quit. Thereafter, he became a

thief, burglar, car thief, and holdup man.

When things got too hot for him in Pittsburgh he picked up and left without so much as a good-bye to his parents or family. He was, from the very outset, an outlaw and a renegade. His size and strength made him feared by the toughest hoods.

He was introduced into the mob by Abe Reles who then introduced him to Lepke Buchalter and Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro, Buchalter's lieutenant. Buchalter saw in the young man who stood before him a useful ally.

"Can you take orders?" Buchalter asked.

"Yes, sir. Right down the line."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"You wanted in Pittsburgh for anything?" Buchalter wanted to know.

"No, sir. Clean as a whistle."

"Okay. You're on my payroll. A C-note and a half a week. When I need you I'll send for you, and when I send for you I'll want you to come then and there. Understand?"

"Sure. What's going to keep me?"

"You're the only one who'll know."

Pittsburgh Phil nodded. "I'll be here any time you call me."

"And if you're sent out on something, a contract, or any-

thing else, I'll expect you to fulfill it. Do we understand each other?"

"Sure thing."

"Okay." Buchalter reached into a pocket and counted out three hundred dollars. "That's front money. It's not your salary. You'll pick up your salary from Abe Reles every Saturday. Okay, Phil. That's it. Good to have you with us."

That was Pittsburgh Phil's introduction to Lepke Buchalter and Murder, Inc. It spelled hell for the peace and order of society.

In the mob at the time, besides Pittsburgh Phil, Happy Maione, and Abe Reles, were Dukey Maffetore, Dasher Abbandando, Vito Gurino, Blue Jaw Magoon, Pretty Levine, Bugsy Goldstein, and an assortment of hangers-on who were given odd jogs from time to time.

At the head of this troop were three of the toughest gangsters alive. The very shrewd Joe Doto, alias Joe Adonis and more often respectfully referred to as Joey A.; Albert Anastasia, head of the Brooklyn docks; and Vito Genovese who had only recently left the guiding and protective hand of Meyer Lansky.

While Pittsburgh Phil had never done time until he was finally convicted of murder and

sentenced to the hot seat, Abe Reles, who was named chief lieutenant by Buchalter with the agreement of Adonis, Anastasia and Genovese, had served four prison sentences before he was twenty-one. In addition, from 1930 to 1934, he was arrested twenty-three times but was never convicted of anything.

Reles prided himself on the fact that the cops could never get anything on him. Because of that and because Pittsburgh Phil was a confirmed cop hater, Pittsburgh Phil looked up to Reles and took orders from him.

When Pittsburgh Phil joined them, a division of loyalties and feelings plagued the gang and the men who bossed them. Anastasia and Genovese had broken with Lansky. Joe Adonis had not. Anastasia was friendly with Buchalter and Shapiro. Genovese was not. The Brooklyn mob, composed as it was of Italians and Jews, worked together with mixed feelings.

This division didn't affect Pittsburgh Phil, nor the men he worked with most closely.

Reles, a hulking thug who resembled an ape, had beaten six murder raps. He was as vicious as a snake. Pittsburgh Phil was the epitome of cruelty. Together with Bugsy Goldstein

they made a formidable trio and the rest of the mob had no desire to challenge them.

Still, the vague animosity that rode the periphery of talks when the mob was called together did not escape Pittsburgh Phil. He was extremely perceptive, street-wise, and was able to read into a situation things the others did not or could not. He mentioned it to Reles.

"These Guins aren't too happy about you, me, or Bugsy, or haven't you noticed it?"

"What Guins?" Reles asked.

"Genovese for one. Abbandando for another."

"You're wrong, Pep," Reles said in a reassuring tone. "The Dasher, Happy, Maffetore, and Gurino are guys I picked. They take orders from me and are on our side. Genovese is only one vote. Anastasia and Joey A. are two votes and they are for us because they are working very close to Buchalter and Shapiro. You got nothing to worry about."

"Listen, Abe," Pep said emphatically, "I'm not worrying about anybody. Anybody wants to get me they can come try it. I don't bar anyone."

PITTSBURGH PHIL was mollified for the time being, but if he had any doubts as to his standing with the top hoods in the

organization the incident that followed his talk with Reles erased it. He was given a contract to kill a rival hood of the mob boss in Jacksonville, Florida. Arriving in Jacksonville he was met at the airport by a couple of hoods who drove him to the street where the intended victim lived. One of the hoods pointed out the house to him.

"That one there, on the corner. The guy comes out every morning about ten o'clock. It should be real easy for you."

"Don't tell me how easy it's going to be. You don't know a damn thing about it!" Pep exploded. "You fingered the guy. That's all you're supposed to do. I'll take care of the rest. You got that?"

Pep's anger frightened the hood. He said, "Sure, sure, just like you say. You're running the show."

"Don't forget it!" Pep declared.

The next day, Pep drove over to the victim's house in a stolen car and looked over the scene. He didn't like the setup. The corner house, situated as it was, allowed two-way traffic. At eleven o'clock in the morning the street was busy. Housewives were out on their porches cleaning, sweeping, talking to their neighbors, bill

collectors, deliverymen, and motorists, seemed to come and go in an endless stream. Anything could happen.

It was a bad setup in other ways. With that many people out, there was the certainty that one or more of them would be able to identify him afterward. Furthermore, no preparations had been made for an expert wheelman to drive the getaway car or a crash car to block pursuit. The local hoods were a bunch of stupid bunglers, Pep reasoned. They had no finesse in the setting up of an assassination.

Pep returned the next morning and waited for the victim to emerge from his home. Pep followed him on foot. In a restaurant, where the victim had breakfast, Pep sat at a table behind him. The victim went into a haberdashery and Pep followed.

Finally, the victim went into a movie, and Pep followed him in there. The target took a seat in the very last row. Pep leaned against the wall in the darkened theatre and studied the situation. His hand came in contact with a glass panel set in the wall. Inside the panel was an ax, and under the panel was an inscription: *To be used in case of fire.*

"Easy," Pep thought. "I take the ax and sink it into the

guy's skull. One whoppo and it's all over with."

He pushed the panel back quietly, removed the ax. He fingered the ax eagerly. He knew that once he struck the death blow, there would be a lot of commotion, especially among the women, and that in the confusion he could run out, disappear in the street, take a cab to the airport and be out of town before the cops could begin their investigation. He raised the ax. At that very moment, however, a patron in an end seat farther up front got up and started toward the exit. The intended victim leaped from his seat and hurried to the vacant seat. That was the last straw. Pep decided the contract was jinxed. He laid the ax down and walked out.

The next day he reported to Buchalter and explained what had happened. Buchalter listened attentively. He knew that to leave a contract unfilled was a serious offense. If the Jacksonville boss complained it would necessitate the convening of the cartel's kangaroo court. Buchalter turned to Jake Shapiro.

"What do you think, Jake?" Buchalter asked.

Shapiro shrugged. "I think Pep was right. The whole setup was wrong. I say we pass it over and turn it back to the

guy in Jacksonville. They was wrong all the way. Like Pep said, they should have made better arrangements."

Buchalter nodded. "Okay Pep, we'll back you. You're clean. Forget about it."

The fact that he missed on the contract bothered Pep a great deal. He was suffering from two alternating emotions: frustration and rage, the latter as much against himself as against the people in Jacksonville who had failed to set up the contract properly. He felt that he had lost face with the mob. He tried to explain it away by excuses.

"I had the bum all set for the ax when he turns out to be lousy, god-damned chair-hopper."

Most of the mob attached themselves to the belief that it wasn't his fault and he did the right thing by passing it up. All, that is, except Blue Jaw Magoon.

Blue Jaw was built like a Mack truck. He had close cropped hair, a flat nose, a large head, and always had a permanent five-o'clock shadow which gave him his nick-name. He was without fear, hated cops, and was a thorough and heartless thug. He stared hard at Pep.

"I dunno about you, Pep," he said in a slow manner. "The

uy was right in front of yah. Why dint yah carry a ice-pick and ram it in his heart, right through the back, huh?"

Pep stared grimly at Blue aw. "You wasn't there so you on't know what you're talking bout. I never miss on a contract. This was the first time and I told you like it was."

"Yeah, I know yah did but I'll tell you somethin'—if it was me, I'da put a wire around his neck and strangled him right here."

"You weren't there, Blue aw, so you don't know," Pep retorted angrily. "Don't push."

"I'm only tellin' yah, see. Don't yah push me either."

"Okay, so you told me, so rop it."

"Come on, come on," Abe eles said, "forget all this crap. You guys don't want to tangle with each other cause neither of you is gonna win. Shake hands and forget about it."

Pep held out his hand. Blue aw hesitated then shook it. It was the first time Pep had been challenged by any member of the mob, and only Blue Jaw had the guts to do it.

Pep redeemed himself a short time later. The next contract involved Hy Yuran, a dress manufacturer who had made a fortune in the garment industry. Buchalter had used Yuran

to help him in organizing the dress manufacturers and Yuran became deeply involved with the boss of Murder, Inc. Buchalter's trial was approaching in 1939 on charges of extortion. Word came to him that Yuran was going to testify against him. Lepke Buchalter called in Pep.

"This guy, Hy Yuran, Pep. He's up in the Catskills on a vacation. He's going to talk, to testify against me. He's got to go. Fast. Sholem Bernstein is up there, in Fallsburg. He'll finger Yuran for you. Do a good job on this bastard, Pep. I gave him all sorts of breaks and now he's turning rat on me."

"I'll take care of it, Lepke. You can depend on it."

"I know. That's why I want you to handle this. Contact Sholem as soon as you get to Fallsburg."

Sholem Bernstein was a loser most of his life. He had a love for horses and women. The horses were slow and the women fast. He was involved in car thefts on a wholesale basis, bookmaking, strong-arming, burglary, safecracking, and as a specialist in various aspects of assassination.

Bernstein could have been nicknamed the Kiss of Death Kid because all the friends he had in the rackets died violently.

Like the Cooperman brothers. Three of them were killed. About three months after Willie Cooperman was buried alive by Pep and his cohorts, Bernstein ran into Fatty Cooperman in an all-night cafeteria. He went into the lone telephone booth and made a call to Pep. He then re-joined Fatty Cooperman, picked up the tab and said, "Come on, Fatty, I'll drive you home."

"Gee, thanks," Fatty said. "It'll save me walking."

It was four A.M. when Bernstein let Fatty out of the car in front of his apartment building.

"Thanks, Sholem," Fatty said, and walked into the building. He was met by a blistering round of gunfire. Pep, Blue-Jaw Magoon, Happy Maione and Dasher Abbando fired simultaneously. They hit Cooperman with about twenty slugs. So went Bernstein's friends—with his help

This was the man Pep got in touch with in Fallsburg. "I want to see you in my hotel, Sholem. Come over as soon as you can."

When Sholem Bernstein arrived at Pep's hotel he found Pep with Jack Drukker, Allie Tennenbaum, and Simey. Bernstein wanted to know what was up. "How did you know I was here?" he asked.

"Lepke told me. I want you to



HAPPY MAIONE

finger Hy Yuran for me. I got a contract on him. All you gotta do is locate Yuran and call me. Understand?"

"Yeah, sure, if it's on Lepke's orders."

"Didn't I tell you it was."

"No. All you said was that Lepke told you where I was."

"You dumb ox. Do like I tell you. I'll be right here. Go ahead."

Bernstein feared Pep's anger. Moreover, an order from Lepke wasn't something you ignored. "Okay, Pep. I'll call you as soon as I find him."

"Don't waste any time. I

don't like sitting around this dump all night."

Bernstein learned that Yuran was at a cabaret. He called Pep and told him the name of the cabaret. "Yuran is sitting at the bar. He's wearing a light blue suit."

"Okay, got it. Where are you?" Pep snapped.

Bernstein told him.

"Stay there."

"Why? Why should I stay here?"

"Because I'm telling you, that's why. Don't argue with me. When I tell you to do something, do it. Understand?"

"Okay, okay, I'll stay here."

Pep sent Jack Drucker, a minor hood in the mob, to pick up Bernstein. Then he nodded to Tennenbaum and Simey. "Let's go."

The three drove to the cabaret. Pep and Tennenbaum went in, located Yuran. Pep took a seat next to Yuran at the bar. He spoke quietly.

"Mr. Yuran, there's someone outside who wants to talk to you. Let's go."

"Who are you?" Yuran asked.

"A messenger boy. I was told to come in and give you the message. I gave it to you. Let's go."

"Who wants to see me out there?" Yuran asked, eyeing Pep suspiciously.

"Mr. Yuran, I came in to give

you a message. Don't give me any trouble. I don't like trouble. Let's go." Pep's tone was ominous. Yuran paid his tab, got up and walked toward the door. When he saw Tennenbaum standing there he hesitated. It was too late. Pep gave him a hard shove that sent him sprawling into the back seat of the car through the door that Tennenbaum had opened. Pep got in beside him. Tennenbaum got in the front seat beside Simey who was at the wheel.

Simey drove down a lonely road. Yuran began to plead with Pep. "Look, don't do this to me. I'll pay you. Just let me go. I'm rich. I'll give you ten grand. Just let me go."

Pep spat in his face. "You're a rat, Yuran. I don't do business with rats."

"No, you're wrong. I'd never testify against Lepke. He's wrong about me. Look, twenty grand. Fifty. Let me go."

Pep took an ice-pick from an inside pocket of his jacket and plunged it into Yuran's chest, again and again. He repeated it a score of times, even after Yuran was dead. He then went through Yuran's pockets and removed a large roll of bills and put it into his pocket.

Simey, as agreed upon, drove to a cemetery at Loch Sheldrake. Drucker and Bernstein were already there. Pep drag-

ged Yuran's body from the car, laid it on the ground, pointed a .45 caliber pistol at Yuran's face and shot it from his head.

"Okay," Pep said to Tennenbaum and Simey, "bring out the quick-lime and the shovels."

The three men dug a grave, lined it with quick-lime, tossed Yuran's body into it, covered the grave and smoothed the dirt over it. Pep studied the grave, nodded.

"That quick-lime will take care of him." He turned to Sholem Bernstein. "You know where this guy's car is? It's gotta be parked in the lot back of the cabaret. Here's the keys. Drive it back to Brooklyn and turn it over to Oscar. Tell him to cut it up."

"Why do I have to drive it back to Brooklyn?" Bernstein asked. "Suppose I get stopped?"

"You'll talk your way out. You're good at that." Pep turned to Drucker. "Take Sholem back to the cabaret and make sure he gets in Yuran's car. Okay, let's go."

THE CATSKILLS seemed to be a favorite area for Pep's handiwork in murder. Pep went to a dance in Brooklyn one Saturday night in search of romance and fun. At the dance was a lovely blonde named Evelyn Mittelman, the girlfriend of Sol

Goldstein, a hood connected with Socks Lanza, a vicious, ruthless extortionist who controlled several services to which fish dealers belonged, most of them unwillingly.

Goldstein's connection with Socks Lanza didn't bother Pep, not when an obviously hot and willing package like Evelyn Mittelman was the prize. Sol Goldstein had taken Evelyn away from a hood named Bob Fuerer whom he killed.

Pep approached Evelyn, who was sitting down alongside a wall, and made a pitch. Evelyn knew all about Pep. She was intrigued that a notorious hood and killer like Pep would find her attractive. She listened to all Pep said with a smile and nods of her attractive head. Willing? Yes. She was very willing. At that moment, Sol Goldstein came over and wanted to know what was going on.

"You're talking to my girl, Pep," Goldstein said.

"She was your girl," Pep retorted. "She's mine now. Tell him, Baby."

Evelyn merely smiled prettily.

"Let's you and me go outside and settle this," Goldstein said. "Nobody takes my girl away from me."

"Sure, Sol," Pep agreed. "Better yet, let's go next door to the

pool room where no one will bother us."

Goldstein foolishly agreed. In the pool room, Pep picked up a heavy cue stick and beat Goldstein over the head, face, and body, beating him unconscious. He then went back to the dance hall and picked up Evelyn. He took her to his apartment where she moved in the next day as Pep's mistress.

It was only the beginning of Goldstein's bad luck. He lost favor somehow with Socks Lanza and was dropped from Lanza's organization. He then decided that he had had enough of the rackets and turned semi-legitimate, engaging in bookmaking, a little shylocking, and handling hot goods in whatever fashion they came.

He met a sweet young thing named Helen Morris, who was the daughter of a used-car dealer, fell in love with her and married her. He took her to the Catskills on their honeymoon.

However, he knew too much about a lot of things when he was dismissed from Lanza's organization and on the second night of his honeymoon things happened in New York. Pep was called by Lepke Buchalter.

"You know Sol Goldstein, Pep?" Buchalter asked.

"Sure I know him."

"He's up in Glen Wild. He's your contract. Okay?"

"Sure thing, Lepke," Pep replied happily. "No problem. I'll take care of this but good."

Pep got together Louis "Pretty" Amberg, Dukey Mafetore, Jack Cutler, and Mikey Syckoff and the five drove to Loch Sheldrake in two cars. The next night, shortly before nine o'clock, the phone rang in Sol Goldstein's motel room. Goldstein was nearly dressed, as was his bride, for the dance that was being held in the motel's large cabaret.

It is not known what the caller said to Goldstein but whatever it was, and it must have been important, Goldstein said he would be outside the cottage in five minutes. Cutler was at the wheel and Pretty and Mikey were in the back seat. Cutler held the door open for Goldstein and he got in beside him.

Pep had given the three men instructions not to kill Goldstein but to knock him out and bring him in. Pretty mugged him, hitting him over the head with a hammer knocking him unconscious. They drove to the rear of Pep's room.

Pep came out, saw the unconscious Goldstein and smiled as if he were receiving a golden statuette for a valorous performance. He wrapped Goldstein's body in a blanket, tied him securely with heavy rope, all

while Goldstein was still alive.

Three of the men carried the blanket-wrapped victim to the lake shore where Jack Cutler and Mikey Syckoff were waiting with a rowboat. Pep weighted the body down with heavy chunks of steel then tossed the body into the rowboat, rowed out to the middle of the lake where the water was about twenty feet deep and tossed it overboard. That was the end of Goldstein.

The mysterious absence of Hy Yuran from his office now came to the attention of the Brooklyn District Attorney's office because Yuran was an important witness, though a secret one as they thought, in the forthcoming trial of Lepke Buchalter.

Burton Turkus, an assistant district attorney who had been appointed to clean up the stench in Brooklyn and put a stop to the ever-increasing number of murders, almost two hundred up to this point, called in two of the toughest detectives assigned to his office.

"I want every one of those hoodlums off the streets," Turkus declared. "Bring them in on any charge you can and lock them up. I'll see to it that they get some time, even if it's for spitting on the sidewalk."

Turkus then consulted with Judge Franklin W. Taylor.



When told the facts of the number of murders and other crimes that were being committed by the Brooklyn mob the jurist became incensed.

"The skull and crossbones of this pack of pirates must come down, once and for all!"

The arrests of a score of members of the mob followed quickly. They were charged with various misdemeanors and given sentences of sixty and ninety days. The one hood the detectives couldn't nab, however, was Pep. He was off on assignments.

In Scranton, he took Lew Marcowitz for a ride, killed Jack Steinberg with a shotgun blast, strangled Sam Wichner and stuffed his body in the trunk of his car. In Massachusetts, he murdered a hood named Dave Green.

In his own bailiwick, in East

New York, Brownsville, and Ocean Hill, Pep left bodies in the street, in automobiles, and in doorways. The detectives kept hearing three names, Pep, Pittsburgh Phil, and Harry Strauss, and then learned they belonged to one man, a hood to whom murder was a form of entertainment. There were witnesses. But not one of them could be sure, or so they said. The name of Pep struck fear in their hearts.

Happy Maione, Dasher Abbandando, Bugsy Goldstein, Abe Reles, Vito Gurino, Dukey Maffetore, and the others served their time and came out. The murders increased, suddenly and violently.

Two victims were stripped of their clothes, stood up against a wall and riddled with heavy caliber slugs. Another victim was strangled and left in a stolen car. Another was cremated and left in a vacant lot. Still another was hacked with a meat cleaver, tied in a burlap sack and thrown into a sewer.

Always, the three names came up—Pep, Pittsburgh Phil, Harry Strauss.

"Get him!" Turkus told his detectives.

"There's nothing on him. Witnesses are afraid to talk. And not a single member of the mob is willing to finger him."

"Get something on one of

them, Murder One, and he'll talk for a deal. Anyone. If witnesses are afraid to identify this guy Pep then surely there must be one member of that filthy mob they would be willing to identify.

"We'll see," one of the detectives said.

THE FIRST BREAK came from an unexpected source. A letter came to Burton Turkus' office. It was a brief note which read:

"Dear Sir: I am doing a bit in the City Workhouse on Rikers Island. I would like to talk to you about a murder in East New York." The note was signed, "Harry Rudolph."

Every detective in Brooklyn seemed to know something about Rudolph. They all agreed on one thing, that Rudolph was nuts.

Turkus checked Rudolph's arrest sheet. "This guy is serving a small sentence on a misdemeanor. He certainly doesn't want to trade his information for a reduction in his sentence. Go talk to him," he ordered two of his detectives.

The detectives went to Rikers Island and interviewed Rudolph.

"I hate that Brownsville mob," Rudolph stated. "They killed my friend, Red Alpert. I saw them do it."

"Are you willing to testify to

that?" one of the detectives asked. "I mean, go before a grand jury and tell what you saw?"

"You betcha life I do. You just take me there."

"Okay. We'll be in touch."

Back in Turkus' office, the Assistant D.A. and the detectives checked the files on the Red Alpert murder. It was there.

"Alpert, Alex, alias Red. nineteen years old. Small-time Hoodlum. Shot at the edge of a yard. November 25, 1933. No witnesses."

For more than six years no one had admitted knowing anything about who had done the killing or why. The detectives figured the murder could have been done for any one of a dozen reasons, but not one of them made sense. Why kill a small-time thief? Why not just set him straight and let it go at that?

Rudolph was brought before Turkus.

"Who did the killing of Alpert?" Turkus asked.

A stenographer was taking down the notes of the interview.

"Abe Reles, Dukey Maffetore and Bugsy Goldstein. They grabbed Red when he came outta his house. They also shot me." He yanked up his shirt and exposed an ugly scar.

"Why?" Turkus asked him.

"I don't know. Those guys is all-nuts. They'll kill you for no reason at all. Me and Red wasn't bothering them at all. In no way. They just didn't like us, is all."

Turkus ordered Rudolph placed in protective custody. The all-important fact now was that here was someone who was willing to name names, who stated that, "I saw Reles, Bugsy and Dukey kill my friend." It was sufficient to ask the grand jury for an indictment. It would also take Reles, Dukey and Bugsy off the streets, until the trial, anyway.

Rudolph was taken before the grand jury. That afternoon an indictment charging murder in the first degree was voted. It was a beginning, even though the chances of a conviction on the unsupported testimony of the victim's friend was slim.

Turkus knew that a smart lawyer would tear Rudolph to shreds on the stand. However, there was a chance that one of the three hoods, faced with a Murder One charge might want to make a deal. Turkus called Captain William A. Sullivan, chief of the Twelfth Detective District.

"Captain, take some of your men and pick up these three hoods, Abe Reles, Bugsy Goldstein, and Dukey Maffetore.

They are wanted on a Murder One warrant."

The detectives searched every known hangout for the three hoods, but they were nowhere to be seen. They headed finally for a restaurant adjoining the big market on East New York Avenue, a known hangout for most members of the mob. They waited there for several hours but neither of the three showed up. At one o'clock in the morning, Captain Sullivan got up from the table and walked over to the counter where he spoke to the waiter.

"You know Abe Reles, Bugsy Goldstein and Dukey Maffetore?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'm Captain William Sullivan, Chief of the Twelfth Detective District. You tell any one of those three or all of them, if they should come in, that I want to see them in my office at eight o'clock tomorrow morning. Understand?"

"Yes, sir. I'll tell them."

Abe Reles and Bugsy Goldstein got the message in the restaurant early that morning.

"Is that so?" Reles said when told Captain Sullivan wanted to see him. "The same old crap."

"Yeah," Goldstein chorused, "it sure is."

In their careers, from the time they were juveniles, the

two had been arrested a total of seventy-six times on charges ranging from simple larceny to murder. They had served only fifty months between them. The two met the next morning and walked into Captain Sullivan's office with a jaunty air.

Reles said, "You want to see us, Captain?" He grinned, as did Bugsy Goldstein, both expecting to answer a few perfunctory questions and then walk out. They were wrong because neither of them was ever on the street again as free men.

Dukey Maffetore was picked up that afternoon in his home and taken to the Detective Bureau in handcuffs.

The three hoods were separated so they couldn't get together on a story or confer in any way. Abe Reles was locked up in the Tombs in Manhattan. Maffetore was taken to the Bronx County Jail. Goldstein was locked up across the bay in the jail on Staten Island.

The detectives figured that Reles and Goldstein were the toughest of the trio so they just let them sit without bothering to question them. They concentrated their interrogation on Dukey Maffetore.

Dukey Maffetore was twenty-five years old and hadn't done an honest day's work in his life. He was an avid reader of comic books. He

would be engrossed in one of the books until he was given an order to do something, as often as not something that could lead him to the electric chair, and then he would put down the comic book and carry out the assignment. He looked up to Reles, Goldstein, and most of all to Pep, whom he not only respected but feared.

Physically, he was small, a flyweight, with a lean face and the intelligence of a twelve-year-old child, and a not too bright child at that. He was placed in an isolation cell, without his comic books. After several days in cold storage he was visited by Detective Jack Osnato, a cop who knew his way around with hoods, all kinds.

"How they treating you in here, Dukey?" Osnato asked.

"They ain't treating me at all," Maffetore whined. "What the hell they got me in here for? I didn't do anything."

"Dukey, you're in serious trouble. You're charged with murder. You could go to the chair."

"Murder?" Maffetore yelled. "I ain't never killed nobody!"

"Maybe not. But you were there. It's the same thing. I'll tell you something, Dukey. You'll be a sap if you stick with those guys because they won't do a thing for you. Think it



ALBERT ANASTASIA

over." Osnato left without giving Maffetore a chance to reply.

On Osnato's second visit two days later he brought Maffetore some cigarettes and talked with him in Italian. "Why do you want to stick with those guys, Dukey? They've been using you all the time. They've been picking up the big money and paying you off in peanuts. They eat steaks and drink champagne, go to Florida in the winter, have flashy broads and live the good life."

"I got a girl too," Maffetore argued.

"Sure you have. But you've

never gone to Florida in the winter or had a C-note in your pocket. Those guys, all of them, carry C-notes around like you carry dimes, and they've been to Florida a dozen times." He shrugged. "Well, it's your funeral." Again he left without giving Dukey a chance to answer.

Maffetore yelled after him as Osnato was going out the door. "I ain't no rat, see! I ain't no stoolie!"

Several days later, Mike McDermott took over. McDermott was a smart cop. He was Deputy Chief Inspector in command of Detective Headquarters in Brooklyn and Stat- en Island. He was a big Irishman, ruddy-faced, and one of the cleverest cops who ever hit a police department.

McDermott got nowhere with Maffetore. He decided to play it on a very friendly basis, a father and son level.

"Dukey, I know what you're thinking. You believe that I want to turn you into a stoolie. That's not so. You're not a killer. You've been used by Reles, Goldstein, and Pittsburgh Phil. I am not going to press you. What I am going to do is send up a radio for you, food, and some comic books. I don't want to use you, Dukey. I want to help you. Okay? I'll see you later."

McDermott kept his promise, sending up a radio, sandwiches, candy bars, and a dozen comic books. Three days later, McDermott returned with Detective Jack Osnato.

McDermott played it soft. Osnato played it tough. It was an old police ploy that worked about ninety per cent of the time. It was beginning to work on Maffetore.

"Who's gonna believe anything I say if I talk?" Dukey whined.

"Why don't you try it and see?" McDermott urged.

"I can't," Dukey sobbed. "I can't do that to Pep. He's my friend."

"Like hell he is!" Osnato snapped. "Has he sent word to you? Has he sent any money? A mouthpiece? No. He's letting you take the rap for whatever will come." He snapped his fingers. "Dukey, Pep doesn't care that much about you. Now you listen to me. We made it soft for you here, a radio, food, cigarettes, candy, comic books. If you don't come to your senses I will personally see to it that you are transferred to the Raymond Street Jail and you can live there with all the bedbugs and cockroaches and the lousy food."

Osnato paused.

"Lemme think about it," Dukey wailed. "I can't make up

my mind yet. I wanna think about it."

"Okay, Dukey," McDermott said, "you think about it. I'll be back tomorrow."

THE NEXT big break in the case a day later when Harry Rudolph wrote a note to Turkus which read:

"A guy in the can here offered me five grand if I would change my story, square Reles and Goldstein and let Maffetore take the rap."

McDermott and Osnato hurried to Rikers Island.

"Who's the guy?" Osnato asked.

"His name is Frosch."

Frosch was a professional bondsman who handled a great deal of the bail business for the Brownsville mob. At this time, Frosch was in jail awaiting trial on charges of bribing police officers. A stoolie from Los Angeles named Vince Ricardo, who was planted in an adjoining cell, heard the offer and corroborated Rudolph's story. McDermott and Osnato drove to the Bronx County jail and told Dukey what they had learned. Dukey broke.

In a matter of minutes, McDermott and Osnato had Maffetore in their car and driving to the D.A.'s office. Dukey talked for an hour and a half. He told of "a guy that was

killed in a car I stole. Pep told me to steal the car. The next day I see in the papers a stiff is found in the car."

He told of the time Reles and Goldstein "told me to go pick up this guy. I didn't know who he was. I picked him up and drove him to Reles' house then Reles and Goldstein choked him, and we drove him to a lot and Reles poured gasoline over him and burned him up."

There were other incidents. However, none of them added up to enough to make out a murder case. Dukey's stories needed corroboration.

"Why don't you go see Pretty Levine," Dukey said. "Pretty is smart and knows a lot of things."

McDermott and Osnato went looking for Pretty Levine.

Pretty Levine came by his nickname honestly. He had big blue eyes, curly hair, dimples and an engaging smile. Pretty had married a sweet young girl named Helen and quit the rackets. Why he wasn't killed was considered a mystery. The fact was that he had been marked for assassination. What saved him were the arrests of Reles and Goldstein. Levine was told about the assassination that failed.

"That doesn't mean you still aren't going to be hit," Osnato said. "Pep is free out there

somewhere. So is Happy Maione, Vito Gurino, and a few others. Now, you listen to me. Dukey has given us enough on you to send you to the chair. You've got a lovely young wife and child. How old is your child?"

"Sixteen months."

"A boy?"

"A girl."

"You want to see them again then you better cooperate with us."

"I don't know a thing. And if I knew I wouldn't tell you."

"Okay. Have it your way. You want to turn you wife into a widow and your daughter into an orphan, that's your business."

McDermott brought Helen and the baby to visit Pretty the next day. Mother and child were as beautiful as any artist could paint. Pretty and Helen embraced each other with a great deal of emotion. Helen pleaded with Pretty to tell the truth, to cooperate with the police, to think of her and the baby, and their life together.

Pretty broke at last, but all he would say is that he would talk about himself, that and nothing more. He would not implicate Reles, Goldstein or Pep. "I admit everything Dukey said. I was there with him. That's all. You can put me in jail if you want."

Osnato got tough. "You bet your life we'll put you in jail. We'll also put your wife in jail too. She was here and heard your confession. That makes her a material witness."

Pretty raved. "I told you about myself, dammit! What do you want with her? She didn't do anything."

Helen was placed in the Women's House of Detention. When she wanted to see Pretty either McDermott or Osnato would take her over to the jail. Or if Pretty wanted to see her he would be taken to the Women's House of Detention. Pretty held out for almost a month and then he broke. It was in the Women's House of Detention. He and Helen and the baby were alone in a room for almost an hour. When Osnato walked in, Pretty had his arms around Helen.

Pretty said, "If I talk, will Helen and the baby be safe? That's all I want to know. Will you promise me that?"

"You can trust us," Osnato assured him. "We'll give her every protection."

"Okay, take me to the D.A. I'll tell the whole story."

The first thing he said was that Dukey had nothing to do with the Red Alpert killing. It was all Pep. Alpert had burglarized a home and had about ten grand in jewelry. Pep of-

ferred him seven hundred for the lot. Alpert refused.

"I want three G's for the stuff," Alpert insisted.

"Seven hundred," Pep countered.

"You can stuff that seven hundred!" Alpert retorted. "Three G's. That's the price."

Pep then cornered Alpert and killed him in the presence of Pretty, Reles, Goldstein, and another hood named Walter Sage.

Pretty then related incidents of killings in the Catskills in which Pep was involved. McDermott and Osnato now had enough to pick up Pep and charge him with murder, not just one but a dozen. They put out an APB on Pep and ordered a dozen detectives to look for him. It took three days but they finally located him in a restaurant and took him in.

McDermott and Osnato now went to work on Reles and Goldstein. With the information they had they were sure that either Reles or Goldstein would break or try to make a deal for anything but Murder One. They were almost certain it would be Goldstein. They got the surprise of their lives when Reles was the one who wanted a deal.

Reles was an ugly bum who resembled an ape. He was also a braggart. Bugsy Goldstein



LEPKE BUCHALTER

was nervy. Reles was tough. Neither one, however, matched Pittsburgh Phil in viciousness. Pep killed just for the pleasure of it. Faced with the prospect of the chair, based on the testimony of Pretty Levine and the corroboration of Dukey Maffetore, Reles told his wife to go talk to the D.A. and to tell him he was ready to "talk business."

Reles wanted to talk, but only on a deal, and the deal he wanted was to walk out of jail a free man. The thought was abhorrent to the cops. Here was a hoodlum who had committed

more than a dozen murders and he wanted all of them stricken from the records. There was a lot of conversation between McDermott, Osnato, several other detectives, and attorneys from the D.A.'s office. Finally, Burton Turkus said he would talk to Reles.

Turkus explained to Reles that he would appear before the grand jury to testify on the murders of which he knew, without implicating himself, and would not be asked to sign a waiver of immunity.

Turkus explained, "If you don't sign the waiver of immunity, it means you reserve your immunity to prosecution based on the information you give the grand jury."

Reles seemed satisfied. What he didn't know was that there was nothing to prevent his prosecution on any other killing or killings if the D.A. was able to get the information and corroboration.

Reles sang long and loud. He told about murders that shocked the cops and the several assistant district attorneys who were working with Turkus. He revealed Pittsburgh Phil as the most heartless killer the cops had ever heard of. Turkus wanted everyone in the Brooklyn mob, but most of all he wanted Pittsburgh Phil, and he now had all the information

necessary to send Pep to the chair.

Pep had been arrested twenty-nine times in thirteen years but this blood-lusting murderer, this assassin of the devil, had never been convicted of anything. There was no deal for him. He knew it.

He decided to play the crazy act in an effort to beat the chair. He pretended he didn't understand what was said to him, and replied to questions with a vacant stare or said something so senseless it bordered on the comic. He did other things. He would run around in his cell and scream loudly, grab the bars and try to pry them loose. He kicked at the walls, at the iron bed, swore at the cops, cried out for his mother, his wife and kids, all of whom were now nonexistent. His mother had died, and so far as a wife and kids were concerned, they were a myth.

The court was unimpressed with his act. The once neat, tidy, Beau Brummell of the Brooklyn mob, handsome even despite his dirty heart and soul, was as far removed in appearance from his former self as a rose is from a dung hill.

When he was brought into court for arraignment, Bugsy Goldstein looked at him in amazement.

"Cripes," Goldstein sneered, "you make me sick to look at you."

The court read the report of the three psychiatrists who had examined Pep. Their report was that Pep was feigning and shamming. The consensus was that "the subject is neither an imbecile or an idiot, and his act of insanity borders on the farcical."

Pep was ordered to stand trial. Turkus chose the Whitey Rudnick case for a started and backed it up with the strangling and cremation of Puggy Feinstein.

Abe Reles' first day on the stand damned Pep and Bugsy Goldstein. Reles talked for five hours, outlining every aspect of the Rudnick murder. Bugsy Goldstein sat in his chair and stared at Reles with disbelieving eyes. Pep's expression was malevolent. Goldstein leaned over toward Pep.

"We're cooked, Pep. We ain't got a chance."

"I'd go to the chair happy if I could just get my hands on that rat for about five minutes," Pep replied.

Reles' story of how Pep and Goldstein strangled Feinstein filled the entire courtroom with horror. If Reles' testimony wasn't enough to shake Pep and Goldstein, then the testimony of Blue Jaw Magoon,

the toughest of the mob next to Pittsburgh Phil, shattered them because Blue Jaw and Goldstein had been bosom buddies.

Blue Jaw corroborated everything Reles testified to. If Reles' testimony had sent Pittsburgh Phil and Goldstein toward the electric chair, then Blue Jaw's testimony sat them in it and pulled the switch.

The defense attorneys fought long and hard to save Pep and Goldstein but they were fighting a losing battle from the very outset. The jury was out ninety-five minutes. When they returned to the courtroom the tension there was thick enough to cut with a knife.

The Clerk asked, "Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed on a verdict?"

Walter H. Woodward, a stockbroker, who had been the first juror selected and was the foreman, rose and declared, "We have."

"How say you?" the Clerk asked.

"We find the defendants guilty of murder in the first degree as charged."

The Clerk then said, "Hearken to your verdict as the court records it. You and each of you say you find the defendants guilty of murder in the first degree. And so say you all?"

"Yes, sir," the foreman concluded.

It was all over for Pep and Goldstein. A week later both appeared before the court for sentence. Judge Fitzgerald, who was more than a little deaf, asked Goldstein if he had anything to say before pronouncing sentence.

Goldstein had. He said, "I first want to thank the court for the charge he made that is sending us to our death. I only wish that the same applied to you and your family, Judge."

"I didn't hear you," Judge Fitzgerald said. "What?"

Bugsy repeated it. The judge still hadn't heard the crude insult and Bugsy repeated it for the third time. The judge turned to the Clerk.

"What the devil did the prisoner say?" Judge Fitzgerald asked the Clerk.

The Clerk, embarrassed, told him.

Judge Fitzgerald frowned and turned to Pittsburgh Phil. "Do you have anything to say before I pronounce sentence?"

Pep shook his head.

Judge Fitzgerald said, "Having been tried and found guilty of murder in the first degree, the sentence is mandatory upon the court." He stared down on Goldstein with a stern look. "The sentence of the court is that you be put to death. . ."

"In the electric chair," Goldstein broke in, mockingly.

The judge ignored Goldstein, and added, "...in the manner and in the place provided by law."

The next morning Pittsburgh Phil and Goldstein were handcuffed together, placed in a police van and driven to the Grand Central Station for their ride up the river to Sing Sing Prison. A reporter asked Goldstein if he had anything to say.

"Yeah," Goldstein replied, "I would die happy if I could knock off Turkus and take care of Judge Fitzgerald. One more thing. Tell that rat Reles I'll be waiting for him in hell, with a pitchfork. Too bad I can't hold Reles' hand when I sit in the chair. Reles in one hand and that lousy bastard Magoon in the other."

Goldstein went to the chair continuing to curse Reles, Magoon, Turkus, and Judge Fitzgerald.

Pittsburgh Phil walked through the green door, paused, stared at the witnesses gathered to confirm the execution, then turned and walked briskly to the chair and sat in it. The straps were fastened quickly, the hood placed over his head, and then the Warden nodded.

"That's all," an assistant D.A. who was one of the witnesses, snapped. "And good riddance."



The Other Side of Reason

*The man they loved to hate would
care no more. Dead men bear no grudges.
Could we find his secret killer?*

by **JOHN LUTZ**

IT WAS Sheriff Sam Ladester on the line. Semloh hadn't seen him in years, since the glass eye affair.

"Bain Semloh?" repeated the laconic, mid-western voice.

"It is, Sheriff Ladester. It's good to talk to you."

"Maybe you won't think so

when you hear what all I want," Ladester said. "I need a favor."

"I owe you a few," Semloh said warmly. "Let's see, your re-election's coming up soon, isn't it?"

"I hope. And that's part of why I need your help. I heard

you were in the city for the Curious Crime Convention Conference. Thought I'd call you at your hotel to sorta bail me out."

"Trouble in Graham County?" Ladester was the chief law enforcement officer of a small county some distance from the city, the sort of place where an ill-tempered dog would likely be public enemy number one.

"Trouble is right," Ladester drawled. "Has to do with our most famous citizen, Brighton Rank."

"The widely read gossip columnist, eh? I heard he had a home out in your neck of the woods. What's happened?"

"He was shot in the back of the head earlier this morning."

Semloh's lazy, almost lizard-like eyes blinked once. He was interested. "Dead?"

"Deader'n a hollered out tree stump."

"That's dead," Semloh said.

"It'd sure help me in a lot of ways if I came up with something before the big city boys take over the case," Ladester said.

"By 'something' I take it you mean the murderer," Semloh said.

"That'd be nice."

"I'll be there."

It was quite a house. Bain Semloh had driven for over an

hour and a half to reach it. Bleak and impressive, it loomed atop the rise before him, against the climbing-to-noonday sun. There were other large houses half-concealed behind tall trees, owned by wealthy individuals who chose to escape the crime and clamor of the city. Brighton Rank had spent a considerable fortune to have the home built to his own tastes, and Semloh wondered if its darkly ornate ugliness represented its creator's personality.

He maneuvered his rented sub-compact up the long curving driveway lined with poplars and braked before the tall front door. There were three other cars in the circular drive, one of them a dusty tan sedan with a gold sheriff's seal on its side. Without hesitation Semloh climbed from the tiny car, strode up the wide concrete steps and rang the bell.

The door was answered after a pause by a slender man in his early forties, wearing a neat mustache and a rumpled gray suit.

"My name is Bain Semloh. Sheriff Ladester is expecting me."

"Phillip Rank," the man said by way of introduction. "Come right in, Mr. Semloh." He stepped aside as Semloh entered a large entry foyer.

"You are a relative?" Semloh asked as he followed the slender, slightly stoop-shouldered man down a hall lined with oil paintings.

"I'm Brighton's brother."

Suddenly they turned a corner and were in a large comfortable looking room with overstuffed furniture and a high, dark-beamed ceiling. Sheriff Ladester was pacing behind a long beige sofa, and on the sofa, seated perfectly still as wax figures, were two men and a fading but still attractive blonde woman. The trio on the sofa stared expectantly at Semloh, as did a standing, matronly gray haired woman with a gigantic bosom and red-rimmed eyes.

"Hello, Bain! Been a long time." Ladester almost ran over to shake Semloh's plump hand. The three figures on the sofa were suddenly struck with animation and rose. "You've met Phillip Rank," Ladester said. Semloh nodded and the sheriff turned to the others in the room. "This is Elda Rank, Brighton's wife. On the left Ward Rank, another brother, and on the right Simon Crane, Brighton Rank's secretary. Behind them Mrs. Drael, a neighbor from across the street."

Ward Rank looked something like his brother Phillip, lean, gaunt-featured, with a wide,

flaring nose and thin lips. No mustache, though. Simon Crane was a short man, almost as short as Semloh's five six, only he weighed a good deal less than Semloh, wore high-heeled boots to add a few inches, and there was a compact muscularity to him beneath his well cut suit. Standing, Elda Rank was much more impressive than she'd been sitting down. She was what connoisseurs of blondes described as statuesque.

"The famous detective," Ward Rank said with a hint of cynicism. "At least that's what the good sheriff here tells us. No doubt he could use some of your super-logical deduction."

Semloh didn't like the man's pale eyes. A vicious sparkle in them.

"Some small fame is attached to me," Semloh said with a smile. "Professionally useful, at times."

"Mr. Semloh doesn't exactly use super-logic, either," Ladester said.

"Exactly the opposite," Semloh agreed.

"In whatever form, your help will be appreciated," Phillip Rank said, though he looked vaguely apprehensive. "We'd all like to see the murderer of my brother caught."

"If all of you would like to see that happen," Semloh said,

"I assume you believe an outsider committed the crime."

"Why of course!"

"It's possible," Sheriff Ladester said. "That's part of the problem."

"Suppose you show me the problem," Semloh suggested.

Ladester led Semloh from the room, down the hall to a sweeping staircase and up to the second floor.

"Quite an impressive house," Semloh said, "though a bit baroque."

"Five bathrooms," Ladester remarked lazily. "Who in the hell'd want five bathrooms?"

"I suppose you'd need them if all the bedrooms were occupied," Semloh said.

"Six bedrooms on this floor; and Rank's office and a library." Ladester led Semloh through a spacious hall with a parquet wood floor to a closed, dark stained door. He pushed the door open and let Semloh step inside.

It was a neat, workman-like office. Filing cabinets along one wall, a large bookcase, electric typewriter on a stand. Slumped over the desk facing what appeared to be a French window was Brighton Rank, a neat, round bluish hole near the crown of his balding skull. In the finger of Rank's right hand was a pencil, the note paper beneath the hand was blank

but for a short S-shaped scrawl. On the carpet near the filing cabinets lay a small caliber chromed pistol.

"Don't appear to be any prints on the gun," Ladester said. "Wiped cleaner'n a eye-tooth."

"Clean," Semloh said. "Everything the way it was found?"

"So I'm told. I didn't touch anything."

"Those French doors?"

"Unlocked," Ladester said. "And they go out to a small porch with steps running to the garden below. The killer could have entered and left that way."

"Any sign of that happening?"

"Nope. No sign it didn't happen, either. Ground's hard from a month's drought."

"What are their respective stories?" Semloh asked, pointing with a pudgy finger at the floor to represent the people below. "None of them seem particularly grieved by Rank's death."

"None of them are, I guess," Ladester said. "Rank had the reputation of being a one way S.O.B."

"Who heard the shot?"

"All of them. And Mrs. Drael, who rang the front doorbell a few seconds after the shot, claimed she caught a glimpse of a stiff-legged man running be-

tween the trees along the drive."

Semloh raised his almost nonexistent brows. "Stiff-legged?"

"She said he was sort of lurching along. She had an appointment with Rank to try to talk him into giving to some charity or other, and she says she was thinking about that and didn't pay too much attention."

"Where do the members of the household say they were when they heard the shot?"

"Mrs. Rank was in the kitchen preparing a late breakfast; Phillip Rank claims he was in the bath near his bedroom downstairs shaving; Ward Rank was reading a book in the room we left downstairs; and Simon Crane was in his downstairs office typing some of Rank's dictation for next week's column. Nothing particularly interesting in that column, incidentally."

"Then everyone was downstairs."

Ladester nodded. "Or say they were. The house is plenty big enough for any of them to have shot Rank, run downstairs and pretend to come from somewhere on the ground floor to the foot of the stairs. They all say when the shot was fired they hurried upstairs to Rank's office. Confusion all over the



place. The door was open and they barged in and found him dead. Then Mrs. Drael rang the bell and asked who the limping man was. She had an appointment to see Rank at ten o'clock, so apparently the killer didn't."

Semloh walked about casually, examining the corpse and everything else in the room with seemingly passive interest. Then he motioned to Sheriff Ladester that they could go back downstairs.

As Semloh and the sheriff reentered the ground floor room Ward Rank looked up at them with distaste. He was languidly smoking a cigarette in a long pearl holder. Semloh instinctively disliked cigarette holders and people who held them.

"Solved?" Ward Rank inquired.

"Almost," Semloh said. He noticed that Phillip Rank was staring at him, his hands in the pockets of his rumpled trousers as he rocked back and forth nervously on his heels. Elda Rank seemed the most composed person in the room. She was seated next to Simon Crane, who was slumped with what appeared to be absolute despondency in the corner of the large sofa.

"Have you finished with things, Sheriff?" Mrs. Drael asked from where she stood near the window. "I mean, is it

all right for me to leave, to go home now?"

Ward Rank looked aghast. "You mean you'd walk out in the middle of the act?"

"Why don't you shut up!" Simon Crane said with surprising viciousness from the sofa. "Don't you realize your own brother's been killed?"

"Past tense," Ward Rank observed. "Nothing to be done about it now."

"Do you have any ideas?" Elda asked Semloh. He noticed for the first time that her gray eyes were large and strangely enchanting, and there did seem to be a muted sorrow in their depths.

"Deduce, super slueth," Ward Rank said. Simon Crane glared at him.

"Mr. Semloh has his own methods," Sheriff Ladester said firmly. "Give him time."

"Oh, I think the facts are becoming murkier," Semloh said, and began to pace absently as he talked. "We will use what I call my procees of illogicality. There are very few clues and in all likelihood the murderer was an intruder in the house. If that is true we will probably never learn his identity anyway, so let's discard that possibility and work on the theory that a member of the household is guilty."

"Preposterous!" Ward Rank

said, clamping his cigarette holder between his teeth.

Semloh shrugged. "You all have motive: Mr. Rank's money in the instance of his wife. The same motive plus sibling rivalry in the instance of his brothers. As for Simon Crane, he might well be in a position to take over Mr. Rank's column himself. It's done that way I understand, the protégé-secretary filling the breach."

"I don't deny it," Simon Crane said. "I intend to attempt just that."

"What you call your 'process of illogicality,'" Ward Rank said disgustedly, "is exactly that. Illogical!"

"Of course," Semloh said. "When a premeditating murderer plans his crime, he anticipates that his pursuers will use logic. Thus he attempts to throw them off the track by arranging circumstances that logically point away from him. He expects logical chains of deduction. Therefore for the sake of this exercise we will assume that what is logical is untrue."

"For instance?" Simon Crane asked interestedly.

Semloh's lips curved up, his mustache down. "Mr. Rank was found dead at his desk, killed apparently as he was beginning to write something. So we will assume he was killed somewhere else."

"Ridiculous!" Ward Rank snorted.

Semloh's smile widened. "Possibly. But who knows where it might lead? We strike what the murderer has fabricated, here and here; and here it crumbles. And the truth is revealed."

Though he still took slow, measured steps, there was something predatory now in Semloh's pacing. "In the back of Mr. Rank's head is a bullet hole, a fired revolver lies on the floor. We will assume he was not shot."

"I still don't understand," Phillip Rank said perplexedly. "Why will we assume that?"

"Because it might well be exactly what the murderer doesn't want us to assume. You see, if your brother wasn't killed in his office, he was killed somewhere else in the house."

"That's logical," Elda Rank said.

"Nothing is perfect," Semloh replied. "If we went right down the line—taking only the illogical alternatives in sequence, there would be a certain consistency and perverted logic of sorts in that."

"True," Simon Crane said, nodding, "I suppose."

"Now why would Mr. Rank have been shot if not to kill him?" Semloh asked himself and the room in general, pacing

almost imperceptibly faster. "To make it appear that he was killed from behind, perhaps. Seems reasonable, so we will reject it. Another possibility is that the killer was trying to disguise the nature of the first wound."

"That doesn't seem too likely," Sheriff Ladester drawled. "A bullet wound from that caliber gun is too small to disguise much of anything."

"It isn't likely the death wound would be smaller than a bullet hole," Semloh agreed, "so for the moment at least we will consider that it was. Perhaps an even smaller caliber bullet caused death, though an autopsy would be able to determine that."

"Possibly my brother wasn't killed," Ward Rank said acidly.

Semloh appeared thoughtful. "Possibly not."

Ward Rank waved a hand disgustedly. "This charade isn't getting us anywhere!"

"I've found," Semloh said, "that with my method of counter-deduction, one sometimes arrives at one's destination quite suddenly and unexpectedly."

"Murdered in another room," Ladester drawled reflectively, "then carried to his office, placed in his desk chair, posed in a writing position then shot. It would take a strong man

with a lot of nerve to do that."

"Excellent!" Semloh said enthusiastically. "So in all unlikelihood it was a woman. A woman like—"

There was a strangled sob. Elda Rank suddenly leapt from the sofa and flung herself at Semloh, clawing and screaming. "How could you!" she shrieked, As Simon Crane caught her waist and pulled her back.

"A moment, Mrs. Drael," Semloh said calmly. Sheriff Ladester moved quickly to stand in the doorway.

Mrs. Drael stopped, stared at the sheriff, then turned to face Semloh, clenching and unclenching her fists. Then something inside her seemed to buckle, and her soft, poised body settled in resignation.

"You were right," she said in a drained voice. "I came secretly up the back way to Brighton's office. He was working, and we went to the library to talk while he did some research. I killed him, struck him with my high heeled shoe as he bent to pick up something I'd dropped."

"Of course," Semloh said. "You're the only one here without apparent motive or opportunity. An ill-conceived love affair?"

"A hate affair. He was going to write about me in his col-

umn." Mrs. Drael's pale complexion blanched even paler. "He discovered that I'd been an accessory long ago in a well publicized murder case; he was going to expose me for publicity!"

"So you decided to kill him first?"

Mrs. Drael shook her head. "I was going to try to exchange some other information I had concerning the case for his silence. Only he wouldn't listen, so I had no choice."

"Then you carried him down the hall to his office?" Ladester asked unbelievably.

"I had to leave that way anyway, so I dragged his body down the parquet hall on a throw rug—it's a trick I learned a long time ago. Then I arranged things to make it look like an intruder had shot him at his desk and left, running around the house and ringing

the doorbell to place myself outside at the approximate time of the murder. I even pretended I'd seen someone outside just in order to give the police a suspect."

Mrs. Drael's heart-shaped, middle-aged face turned suddenly to a mask of fury and her lips drew away from her teeth as she spat the words at Semloh and everyone in the room. "Brighton Rank got exactly what he deserved!"

No one argued with her as the sheriff led her away.

"I don't believe it!" Ward Rank was saying incredulously around his cigarette holder. "How did you do it? It simply defies all reason!"

"Perhaps," Semloh sighed, staring unblinkingly and with vague sadness in the direction the sheriff and his captive had gone. "But then it's an unreasonable world, isn't it?"

COMING SOON:

Another Extraordinary Find in our New Series of—

A "DIFFERENT" STORY

VOICES IN THE LIGHT

A Tale of Delightful Suspense

by JERRY JACOBSON

Agent To The Second Power

*Moonlighting can be
a matter of profit, if
it's done on the quiet.*

by **JAMES P. CODY**

THE COMPANY was once again calling upon George Snyder to perform his particular services for them.

The call came when Snyder was watering the lawn in front of his Alexandria home that steamy Saturday morning in early August. His wife pushed open the screen door to tell him that he was wanted on the phone, and he thought it was probably someone from his office at the Pentagon where he had been employed these past twenty years as a civilian cost



analyst. There were a lot of hot shots who went to the office on Saturdays, he knew, and they often called him at home to inquire about details of current projects.

But he was wrong. It wasn't the office calling: it was the Company.

As usual, the conversation was succinct and guarded. "Mr. Snyder?" a man's voice asked at the other end of the line.

"Yes."

"Mr. Homer Hastings would like to see you."

"All right."

"Today, at fifteen hundred."

"I'll be there," George Snyder answered, and he hung up the phone. That was all there ever was to these conversations with the unknown voice at the other end of the line. But Snyder understood the message exactly. There was, of course, no such person as Homer Hastings, but Snyder knew the person he was to meet and the precise office where he was to report at the Company's headquarters in Langley.

He returned to the front lawn, and picked up the hose, turning on the water in a thin, fine spray. He noticed that he was breathing a little more rapidly than usual. It had been more than six months since the Company had called him, and he was beginning to think that at age fifty-eight he had outlived his usefulness to them.

But now here was one more assignment.

At ten minutes to three that afternoon Snyder drove to the

main gate at Langley, and presented his driver's license to the guard at the sentry box. The guard picked up a phone, confirmed the fact that George Snyder had an appointment, and then placed a card under the windshield wiper and told Snyder where to park.

The same check was repeated by another guard just inside the door of the main building, and finally Snyder was able to take the elevator up to the third floor.

Thomas Duggan was sitting behind his large oak desk, intently studying some papers, as Snyder was ushered in.

"Good to see you again, George," Duggan said, rising to come around the desk and shake hands with Snyder. "Health okay?"

"Health's fine, Tom," Snyder answered with perhaps a little too much emphasis.

"Ready to do another little job for us?"

"Sure," Snyder answered, trying not to appear over-eager. "Same kind?"

"Same kind. Pretty much old hat to you now, isn't it?"

George Snyder didn't feel he was expected to answer that, and he waited while Duggan picked up some papers from his desk and handed them to him. He leafed slowly through the papers, letting his eyes scan

the columns of figures and equations.

Finally Snyder said: "Land weapons, eh?"

"Yeah, everything from hand grenades to tanks." Duggan leaned back in his chair, lighting a cigarette. He was a florid-faced man in his late forties, a career government intelligence officer, who had risen through the ranks to head this division of the agency's activities.

"Look all right to you, George?" he asked.

Snyder thumbed the pages for a few more seconds. "It looks more than all right. It looks pretty authentic all the way through."

"We wanted to make this one look really good. Our contacts abroad have discovered a considerable amount of interest among the foreign powers in what the American government is planning in the area of land weapons for the next decade. So we put a lot of authentic stuff in that study, but it's stuff which they should be able to get themselves anyway with a little leg work, and we weren't too worried about that."

"So where's the bogus part?"

"The part about tank warfare. We've overweighted those figures considerably in order to make them think we'll really have to lay out a lot of money

to produce an adequate amount of tanks. So if your contact asks you any questions about those figures when you pass them off to him, be particularly careful about the tank warfare section."

George Snyder studied the section about tank warfare briefly, noting the concluding recommendation that the construction of tanks was now proving too costly and should be sharply reduced. This was the way the black propaganda operation was played—the clandestine delivery of false or misleading information to the other side in order to deceive them about the nation's actual defense activities.

Black propaganda operations for the government were hardly the sort of activities Snyder ever imagined for himself in his earlier years. Indeed, when the operation was first proposed to him six years ago he immediately rejected the proposal as a preposterous one for a man like himself.

It all started when he received a phone call from someone who asked him if he wanted to do some free lance accounting and cost analysis work on weekends. But when Snyder arrived at the small office on 16th Street in downtown Washington, the man showed him an official I.D. card and

identified himself as an agent for the Company.

He wanted George Snyder to do an assignment for them, but when Snyder protested that he knew nothing about intelligence work the man responded that he would only be asked to do a simple and safe assignment. The agent didn't offer any specifics, but he did talk a lot about Snyder's patriotic duties as an American citizen.

"Couldn't you at least meet our Mr. Homer Hastings?" he asked Snyder.

An appointment was set up in Langley, and Snyder almost did not keep it, but at the last moment he decided to attend, perhaps more from curiosity than anything else. Hastings, who of course turned out to be Tom Duggan, also stressed the patriotic angle, and he appeared to have done a lot of research on Snyder's military service and years of government employment.

The situation was perfect for some effective black propaganda work, Duggan said, and there was nothing dangerous about it. Snyder was employed in the cost analysis division of the Pentagon, and he had access to all sorts of financial reports and statistics and special studies.

He would be an excellent conduit to pass along copies of

these reports to foreign intelligence groups—not the real reports, of course, but misleading ones which would be specially fabricated by the Company.

George Snyder had shaken his head in bewilderment. "How in heaven's name could an inexperienced fellow like me be expected to make contact with foreign agents?"

"You won't have to engage in any activities of that nature at all," Duggan explained. "We'll set it all up for you. Our professionals are particularly good at this sort of thing: our undercover people can get the word to the right places that there's a fellow named George Snyder at the Pentagon who is willing to pass off a little information in return for some money. We can get that message through the intelligence network so artfully that they'll never be able to trace it back to us.

"We'll even let them know how much money you're looking for, so you won't have to haggle about the price. Then, if it works out as we plan, you should be contacted fairly soon by one of their people, and all you have to do is deliver the documents we produce for you. Nothing else to it—and we'll have accomplished a nice little trick of black propaganda."

George Snyder still wasn't

convinced. His only knowledge of intelligence activities was limited to the spy novels he had read, and he wasn't at all enthusiastic about being drawn into that murky world. But Duggan continued to urge him, and he added that as a contract worker for the agency Snyder would of course be paid for his work, some extra income easily and safely earned. Snyder was never quite sure what argument finally convinced him, but at length he agreed to undertake that first delivery, and it did indeed work out as smoothly as Duggan predicted.

Within two weeks after that first meeting with Duggan he received a phone call from an unknown man with a foreign accent who told him in carefully veiled phrases that he was looking for some information which he understood Snyder could supply. A few days later Snyder met the man in a parked car in Rock Creek Park, and he delivered the bogus documentation Duggan had prepared for him. He was given an envelope of cash in return, which he had to pass over to Duggan. And three weeks later he received a check from a dummy firm in downtown Washington for "professional accounting services."

That was almost six years ago, and George Snyder had

participated in the delivery of seventeen pieces of black propaganda for the Company since then. All of them had been accomplished in fairly much the same routine as the first one, with the single exception that over the years Snyder delivered his documents to a variety of different contacts; and only rarely did the same contact participate in more than one exchange.

And now George Snyder had another set of documents in his hands, ready for his eighteenth delivery of black propaganda.

"We've placed the word carefully," Duggan was saying, "that these figures about land welfare are available at the Pentagon. You should be contacted shortly. And, by the way, there's a new man on the cultural staff at the Russian embassy, a fellow who uses the code name of Anton Roskov. If our intelligence is correct, he should be the man who'll be contacting you."

Duggan snuffed out his cigarette. The interview was over, but Snyder lingered a moment more. "Tom... is there any chance of getting some more money for these deliveries?"

A pained expression came over Duggan's face. "I wish I could get you more money, George. But GAO is on our

back about budget, and we have to keep everything tied down for the moment. We've got you up to two thousand dollars an assignment now, and that's five hundred more than when you first started. But maybe next time the freeze around here will melt a little and we can do a little more for you. We'll see, because we sure do appreciate all you're doing for us."

Duggan rose from his chair: the interview was really over now.

GEORGE SNYDER drove home slowly, the documents in an envelope on the seat beside him, and he wondered if Duggan really would try to get more money for him the next time—if there were a next time. He doubted it.

His wife, Edith, was in her room taking a nap, and there was no need for him to lie to her about where he had been this afternoon. At Duggan's strong insistence he had never told his wife about his services for the Company. He had explained his occasional absences when he made a delivery as some moonlighting accounting work, a fabrication which was fortified by the checks he received from the agency's dummy company downtown.

Snyder went to his desk in

the enclosed porch at the rear of the house, and unlocked the bottom drawer, placing the documents in it, and he was about to close the drawer when he saw the single piece of white paper with the column of figures on it.

He extracted it, and studied it briefly: a column of dollar figures which totalled \$50,000. That total should increase within the next short while, he thought. If Duggan knew about this list of figures he sure as hell wouldn't have told him today how much the Company appreciated what he was doing for them.

He ran his hand across his forehead. It's a horrible thing to have to worry about money like this, he thought, and for a long time he hadn't. But he began to feel the severe pinch about three years ago. He and Edith had raised four children, sending three of them through college, and that didn't allow for a large savings program. Nevertheless he and Edith lived simply and they had managed to put away some money for the retirement years.

But then came Edith's illness, the surgery, and the long recuperation, requiring more money than his hospitalization provided. That same year his eldest daughter became a sudden widow when that damn fool

husband of hers ploughed a car into a tree while driving under the influence. The irresponsible idiot had only a miniscule life insurance policy, and Snyder had to come to the financial assistance of his daughter and her three young children.

That completely wiped out Snyder's reserve, and he began to figure anxiously about his retirement a few years away. Even with his pension and his social security he felt he was going to be mightily squeezed. And Edith's health still wasn't too good, and Lord knows what care she might need in the years ahead. It was then that he had begun to ask Duggan for more money for his services to the Company. After all, they had been pretty eager for him to do the work, hadn't they? But all they gave him was some small—and, he thought, token—increases in the contract figure.

He found himself becoming somewhat bitter at what he considered the Company's cavalier treatment of him. Duggan was obviously making extremely good money, perhaps double what he made, and all he had to do was sit there behind that desk while he had to do the dirty work of actually passing off the bogus papers to all those foreign agents. And the final indignity was the fact



that Snyder was required to return to Duggan the purchase money which the foreign agents gave him. Agency policy, Duggan had told him.

Two years ago during a black propaganda delivery George Snyder had found the sudden answer to his financial problems. The agent that time was a man who identified himself as Balkanin, a heavy set person in his early fifties. After the usual exchange of documents and money in a parked car on George Washington Boulevard, the agent had fixed him with a long, hard stare.

"Mr. Snyder," he said coldly, "This will be our last business transaction, I'm afraid."

"Oh," Snyder said simply, and for the first time in all his assignments he found himself becoming extremely frightened. There was something menacing in Balkanin's tone.

"Yes, the last time," Balkanin repeated. "These documents are completely worthless, of course."

"They're not," George Snyder insisted. "They come from. . ."

"I know where they come from," Balkanin interrupted. "Oh, I'll admit they're extremely well done. The first three sets of documents you delivered completely fooled us. But in the fourth set our computers at home picked up one tiny discrepancy which did not square with some other intelligence we had received. And so we did a series of thorough cross checks, and we found a few other little discrepancies in other documents you gave us."

"Of course, these few little warning signs did not permit us to evaluate what was correct and what was incorrect throughout the entire report, but since we knew there were at least some inaccuracies it made the entire report worthless to us."

"If you thought they were incorrect why did you keep pur-

chasing them from me over these years," George Snyder said doggedly.

Balkanin smiled. "Because we wanted to play along with your little charade. You pass off black propaganda to us and you think you have then fooled us. It is to our advantage to have you think you have fooled us. But now we think we have gotten all we can out of it, and I think it's time we stopped."

Snyder's fear was now beginning to escalate into panic, and he began to edge toward the car door. "Relax," said Balkanin. "I'm not going to hurt you. You're only a minor figure in this little drama, not enough to put the whole plot together. If I am not mistaken, I think your Mr. Duggan is undoubtedly the prime architect. He has been plaguing us with black propaganda all over the world."

Balkanin paused, and rubbed his hand across his chin. "But. . . there is one way we might be able to continue our little business arrangement, and much more profitably for you."

George Snyder remained silent, and Balkanin continued: "As I said, we have never been quite sure where the point or points of black propaganda are in these documents. All we know is that they definitely contain black propaganda. You,

however, know about this type of document, and you have undoubtedly been briefed about the accuracy of its contents before you delivered them to us. All you have to do is indicate to us where these reports are inaccurate. That's all."

"Why, that would be..." George Snyder started to say.

"That would be most wise on your part, Mr. Snyder. And for your small services, we will deposit a ten thousand dollar check in a numbered Swiss bank account in Zurich in your name."

The conversation lasted well over half an hour, and during the course of it Balkanin stated that he knew all about Snyder's financial problems. When Snyder finally agreed to indicate the precise points of black propaganda in the document for Balkanin he was able to rationalize his behavior by a number of considerations.

First of all, he still wasn't quite sure that Balkanin was not going to kill him, and he at least had to play along with him so that he could get out of there safely. And then there was the irony that Duggan's plan had never really worked anyway, and so there was nothing to be lost now. Furthermore, if he told Balkanin what was spurious in the document, he would not be *giving* any in-

formation to a foreign power: he would only be telling them what he was *not* giving them. A sophistry perhaps, but a persuasive one to George Snyder that night. And, of course, there was all that money he was going to get.

Later that evening as he was driving home he thought that tomorrow he would call Duggan on that secret emergency number he had been given and explain what had happened. But he never did, and two weeks later he received notification in the mail from a bank in Zurich giving him the number of the new account which had been opened for him with an initial deposit of \$10,000.

Over these past two years Snyder had some sudden moments of severe doubt about what he was doing, but he always seemed able to rationalize it away. And meanwhile his Swiss bank account continued to grow to its present total. It wasn't all the money in the world, but it was his, and it was tax free, and in the coming years he and Edith would be able to draw on it little by little.

Snyder replaced the sheet of paper in his desk drawer, and he wondered how many more opportunities he would get to fatten that bank account.

Perhaps now was the time to start demanding some more money for his services to the foreign agent. They might be more generous to him than Duggan was.

THE CONTACT for the eighteenth delivery came the following Saturday morning, a phone call from a man with a heavily accented voice, obviously Russian.

"My name is Roskov," the voice said, "and I understand you might be able to help me in acquiring some information about land values." He emphasized the word "land" strongly.

"I think I can."

"Could we arrange a meeting so you could give me that information?"

"It will take me a few days to get my facts together. Would Thursday be all right?" Duggan had instructed him to put a time lag between the initial contact and the delivery so it would appear that it took some careful planning to get the documents out of the Pentagon.

"Thursday is fine. Ten o'clock. The Nature Center in Rock Creek Park?"

George Snyder agreed to the time and place, and the following Thursday evening he told Edith that he had to go downtown to do some more accounting work for that firm again.

He drove his 1969 Dodge across the 14th Street bridge into the District, and then circled slowly through the downtown area, trying to kill some time before his appointment with Roskov. It was exactly ten o'clock when he turned into the parking area at the Nature Center in Rock Creek Park. There was only one car in the area, a dark blue Chevrolet, and he was sure that was his contact.

He parked about twenty yards away, and before he had turned off the ignition a man got out of the Chevrolet and started walking toward his car. "I'm Roskov," he said simply in that same heavy accent George had heard on the phone. He was a surprisingly young man, in his late twenties, and his features were almost boyish.

The exchange was completed with even more dispatch than the previous ones. Roskov slid into the front seat beside him, and he barely looked at the documents which were passed to him. He handed an envelope in return, and Snyder put it in his jacket pocket.

"And now," Roskov said, "I understand there is a second business arrangement. You will tell us about the black parts in this document."

Snyder had been making a quick appraisal of the young man beside him, and he decided

he could manipulate him. If the contact had been someone more formidable, like that Balkanin two years ago, he doubted if he would have attempted to press for more money.

"I can help you very easily," Snyder said to the young Russian. "But there have been some complications, and I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask for additional money."

Roskov's eyes narrowed. "I am not authorized to negotiate."

"The security has gotten tighter at the Pentagon, and it entails more of a risk now. I'm going to have to ask for..." He paused and moistened his lips. "For twenty thousand dollars."

"I'm only a messenger," Roskov said.

"Well—take this message: I want twenty thousand dollars deposited in Switzerland for this one."

"I can convey your message."

"And you'll recommend it, too, won't you?" Snyder was feeling very sure of himself now.

Their eyes met and held briefly, and then the Russian said softly: "Yes, I can recommend it."

"Fine," Snyder said, and he proceeded to tell the Russian about the overweighted tank warfare figures in the document he had just given him. He

went on in some detail about the significance of overweighted figures in government studies, and Roskov took out a small pad and began to jot down notes about what Snyder was saying. The Russian did not make any comments, and when Snyder was finished he simply put the pad back in his inside jacket pocket.

"You won't forget about the twenty thousand, will you?" Snyder asked.

"No, of course not. Oh, I'd better make a note of that." Roskov reached into his pocket for the pad, but when his hand came out it was holding a pistol, a .38 Smith and Wesson.

George Snyder's eyes widened. "But—" he said, and the Russian pulled the trigger. A crimson spot, about the size of a half dollar, appeared high on Snyder's forehead near the hair line, and he slammed back against the car door.

Roskov reached over and caught him before he slumped down, and he extracted the envelope of money from Snyder's pocket. Then he allowed him to slide down, as the blood from the fatal wound in Snyder's head began to spurt freely.

Before Roskov got out of the car, he grasped the inside door handle with a handkerchief, and after he had alighted from the car he also wiped the out-

side door handle. He looked around, but there was no one else in the parking area. With quick, brisk steps he reached his car, and a few seconds later he drove away. There was now only one car in the parking area, the 1971 Dodge with the body of George Snyder slumped in the front seat.

An hour later Thomas Duggan was sitting in his office at Langley, smoking a cigarette and reading a report, when the intercom buzzed and the guard on duty told him his visitor was here.

"Show him in," Duggan said into the machine. The door opened, and Roskov entered. The two men shook hands.

"Did it go all right, Bob?" asked Duggan.

"Unfortunately, yes," the young man responded. The Russian accent was gone now, and he spoke in the clipped tones of an Ivy League back-ground.

"Was it the way we thought?"

"You had it figured correctly, Tom."

"And you completed the assignment?"

The young man nodded grimly. "Terminated employment with extreme prejudice, to use the jargon." He took the .38 from his shoulder holster and laid it on Duggan's desk, and

then he placed the envelope with the money next to it. "The ironic part is that the poor slob was even trying to hold up the Ruskies for more money. Your intelligence was one hundred percent this time, Tom."

"Not really. He apparently got away with it for a long time. But that tip from one of our Swiss contacts about Snyder's secret account of \$50,000 in Zurich really put us on to it. Then another agent gave us some intelligence that the Russians had a method of whitening some of our black propaganda. And a more thorough check on Snyder showed he was having financial problems. It all pointed to him, but we still wanted to be certain."

The young man slumped down in the chair opposite Duggan's desk. "I sure wish you could have gotten some one else to do this one, Tom. He didn't look like a bad sort."

"I know. It's a lousy assignment. Here let me get you a drink." Duggan opened a cabinet behind his desk, and poured some brandy into a glass. "But, Bob, we ran the thing through our computers a couple of times, and the name Robert Powell kept popping up. You weren't known around here, because you were working for us over there in Paris, and

with that master's degree in Russian there wasn't anyone around who could fake a Russian accent any better."

Robert Powell took a deep draught of the brandy, and then said: "Why the hell do you think he did it, Tom. Ideology?"

Duggan shrugged his shoulders, and he pointed to the envelope with the money in it. "It was probably that. We should never contract with a man who is in financial difficulties. There's just too much temptation in this work."

"But was it necessary to... to terminate him this way?"

"It *had* to be done that way. We couldn't just go out and charge the man with treason, because that would entail a public court trial, and the agency just couldn't tolerate that. Not only because of the adverse publicity when it became known that one of our contract men had turned into a double agent, but also because it would mean publicizing our covert activities." He paused. "There is another reason, too."

"Yes?"

"We wanted to get the message out to the intelligence

community that becoming a double agent is a risky and often fatal business." He looked intently at the young man across the desk from him, and although Duggan's eyes were blue they almost appeared to be gray at this moment.

Robert Powell finished his brandy in one long gulp, and rose to his feet. "I got the message, don't worry. I think I'll be getting back to Paris now."

"We have a car and driver downstairs. I'll have you driven straight to New York, and you can catch the first plane to Paris from there. There'll be less chance of anyone seeing you in Washington that way."

They shook hands, and Duggan said, "Have a good flight, Bob. I'll be seeing you around."

The young man laughed, but there was no mirth in the sound. "I hope not, Tom."

When he had departed, Duggan placed the envelope of cash in his top drawer, and then he picked up the .38 pistol. He swung out the cylinder and observed that only one shell had been fired. He snapped it shut, and placed it in the drawer, closing it firmly.

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DECEMBER, 1974



DEATH DAY

It was a case of
hate -- of sweet,
sweet hatred. . .

by JACK LEAVITT

STORY AFTER STORY in the day-old *Post-Express* infuriated Arthur Pitkin. "Garbage. . ." He muttered as he squashed the paper and dropped it onto a prison table. Tent-like, the pages swayed before settling in a craggy balance. The photograph of a long-haired blonde—"Dazzling Connie Forbes"—smiled innocently up from the printed page, at Pitkin's scowl.

For the next few minutes, at his special request to the warden, no one would bother him. The time was his alone—until the death sentence called. As he waited, Pitkin felt abandoned, assigned to an ammonia-washed cubicle in the East Wing of Sturdivant Prison, a short walk from the

electric chair. On the street, everyone else had a future he envied—and a past so much easier than his had been.

"What'd they care?" he demanded of the ever-smiling Miss Forbes on the Late Home Edition, *Always Delivered On Time*. "Damned sons-of-bitches." He swatted the paper across the table.

The prison rainbow surrounded him—gray walls, gray ceiling, gray furniture, gray floor. "Even gray people," he growled as he studied the face reflected in his wrist watch crystal. Large jowls, thin lips, a fractured front tooth and troubled eyes. From the room's one window, barred and covered with wire mesh, the early morning sunlight filtered

through, too weak to cast shadows. The watch's second hand swept across the reflected image of his forehead, almost sweeping his memories clean.

"Not much longer," he calmed himself. "Spending it with the blonde would be the right goodbye."

The yard outside, one level below, was quiet. On an ordinary June morning, the cons would be milling around the enclosed square, paying debts, making threats, scratching themselves, counting ahead to the next lock-up. On death days, however, the yard was empty. No prisoners, no echoes. Just sunlight with no one to warm. The cons kept to their cells, four steps forward, four steps back, waiting for the buzz that would flicker along every light bulb in the joint.

After the buzz died, the screams would begin.

Pitkin licked his lips. "Let 'em all die. Cons, screws, the chaplain, the parole board, the blonde bitch, the warden's dog. Everyone! Then they'll know what it's like."

"You calling anyone?" a guard shouted. He cocked his head at Pitkin and squinted for a better view.

"What the hell could you do for me?" Pitkin shouted back.

"Pay the electric bill?"

"Few more minutes," the

guard said. He looked sly. "Don't get lost."

Pitkin spun away from the taunt. Down deep, that guard was burning. All he could do was watch at a distance. A keyhole peeper. A window shopper. Dying second hand. "But no more talking aloud," Pitkin warned himself. Just a private joke for company. Let the guards patrol on schedule and wonder how Arthur Pitkin could keep smiling five minutes from the switch.

Walking to the window, Pitkin ran a fingernail along the screen. The rzzz made his finger tingle. Good! He balled his right hand into a tight fist, flexed the fingers and fanned them across the wires. At the loud rzzzzzz he felt needles dancing along his arm, refreshing him, reviving old pleasures. No electrodes clipped to head and leg, no two thousand volts of electricity, no exploding brain cells—but enough sting for him to feel alive again. His hands rang with the power to kill—and victims walked everywhere.

"Fried to order." He laughed aloud, caught himself and strangled the joke. No one would learn from him how much fun this waiting was. "Who'd believe it?"

"All right, Pitkin," the guard called to him.

The phlegm caught in his throat. "Now?"

The guard nodded and stepped aside to let Pitkin walk into the corridor. Gray walls, striped with a dark line at eye level, marked their way. A steel door ahead, a truncheoned guard behind, and Pitkin trapped in the middle. By stretching out his hands, Pitkin could push against the wall on either side and keep the world from closing in. His fingers made damp streaks in the dusty patches.

"Nervous?" the guard asked.

"Not on your life."

The two men reached the narrow door at corridor's end. They stopped, faced each other and waited silently. With a blink, the guard shifted his eyes away from Pitkin as Pitkin smiled.

"Open it," the guard said.

Pitkin whirled the wheel-like control that swung the door open. Stepping forward into the room he heard the door slam behind him. The guard thumped on the outside to remind Pitkin how lonely it was with the only exit locked.

In the bluish-green light, Pitkin nibbled at his thumb-nail. He stepped up to a small glass eyehole directly in front of him—the only break in the solid walls around him—and pictured himself dragging an

anxious blonde to bed. "We could both die, long before we wake."

Fifteen feet ahead of him shatterproof glass marked the far side of the execution chamber. From there the witnesses had a clear, safe view of timetabled death.

"More keyhole peepers," Pitkin said, as he watched the crowd. "They'll keep. They need me first."

To his left, almost close enough to touch except for the intervening wall, rested the death-chair. Ahead and to his right, on the safe side of the glass wall, the warden had stationed himself, eyes fixed on a large clock, fingers drumming next to a telephone. No one phoned.

The warden coughed but the walls muffled the sound for Pitkin. "No guts." Pitkin breathed hard. "I'd like to get him..."

At 9:59 a.m., the warden raised his arm, forefinger high, and stared towards Pitkin's eyehole. Standing next to a large control panel, Pitkin stared back, then glanced at the wired chair. With slippered feet tapping on the concrete floor, the prisoner sat in hood and harness. At her trial two years ago she was lovely, just like the photographs the newspapers were still printing.

"Dazzling Connie Forbes—The Blonde Butcher."

"Not now," Pitkin tore off a hangnail. His eyes searched for her breasts under the bulky smock. "She'll never know what she missed."

When the warden dropped his hand, Pitkin threw the switch. The rzzzzzzzz ran for fifty-seven seconds, exactly.

Two thousand volts... a three second pause, exactly... then the rzzzzzzzz for another fifty-seven seconds. Voltage enough to kill, not to mutilate. "Let the embalmers have some fun, too."

Satisfied, Arthur Pitkin threw the switch to Off. "Next time, maybe the warden." He left the cleaning up to the regular guards.

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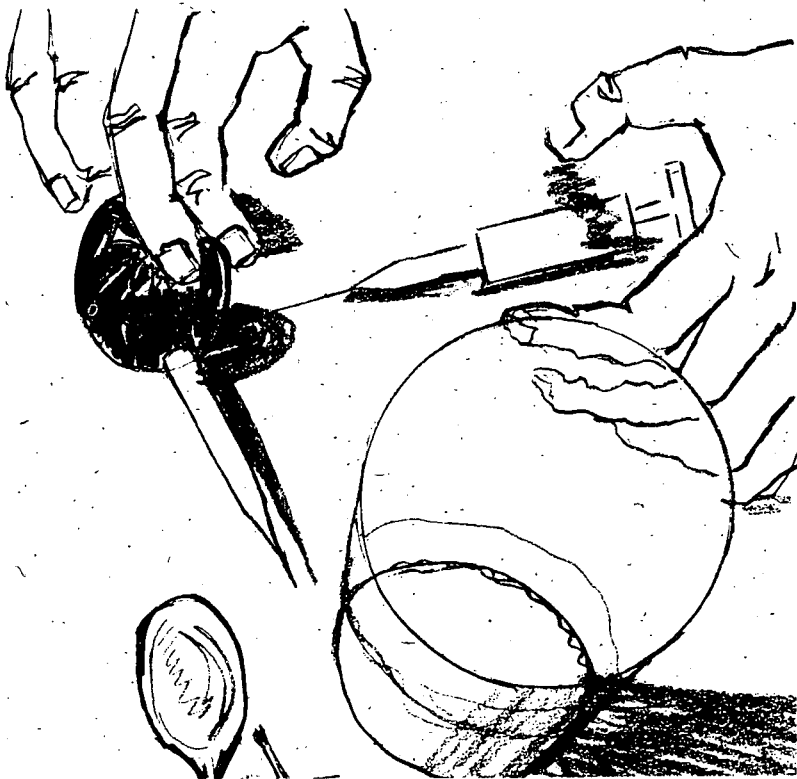
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Letter To Mom



by MITSU YAMAMOTO

Unpopular? So? Maybe he didn't play football or basketball. He knew a lot of other games. With birds and people and some acid.

DEAR MOM: Dad says you want a letter from me to tell you what I am doing while you are sick. I am glad your lungs are better. I hope you can come home soon. Dad was worried when you first went.

I put down my pencil and wondered if I ought to mention

how worried I had been, too. I guess scared was more like it. One day Mom's just tired like she always is and the next they've got her in a sanitarium. They checked me and Dad over right away but we were okay.

Dad keeps saying this isn't going to change my life in any way and not to be so upset. So he's knocking himself out with the shopping and meals and laundry, plus working all day in Manhattan and traveling back to Brooklyn at night. I try to help, but I'm not much good at knowing what to do. But when he tells me exactly what he wants, I always do it.

About two months after Mom got sick I got the idea I wanted to do something special to please her, to sort of make up for her getting sick. I don't get much of an allowance. Because I can walk to school and I take my lunch, Dad says a dollar is plenty for a twelve-year-old kid. But even if I had a pile of money to spend on some kind of bathrobe that was fancy, that wasn't what I wanted. Anyone could give her a bathrobe. That's when Lowell Phillips popped into my head. I picked up the pencil.

I guess Dad told you I made friends with Lowell Phillips like you always wanted me to. He is not so weird when you get to know him. I hardly notice his

big head and heavy glasses anymore. But he still giggles a lot. I am picking up on some of his interests and thought you would like to know that. I tried to get him interested in sports but was not successful. That is the main reason everybody is not friendly with him.

I read what I had written and shook my head. "Not friendly with him" was like saying nothing. Everybody hated him. Jess Richards swore to beat up on him someday when Lowell refused to come out for basketball. Of course Jess is a fanatic about the team, but we could all see that Lowell would be a loss. But he's tall and springy and very energetic.

I didn't care about the sports side so much; it was hearing my mother praise him all the time that got me. She heard from Lowell's mother and soon every mealtime I got his butterfly collection, his chemistry set, his room all filled with junk, neatly stacked, for when he needed something to engineer with. I felt like some kind of dope. I wrote on.

After school today Lowell and I spent some time in Prospect Park. He took his butterfly net. After that we fooled around with a project in his room. He has a lot of imagination. I am still his only friend.

It had been easy to make

friends with Lowell since we lived on the same block and went to the same school. Though he never showed it, my guess is he was lonely being in a new neighborhood and new school, and nobody coming around to be friends before. Jess Richards was still so mad at him he started telling people Lowell probably came from some special school that didn't allow sports. While it's true that Lowell doesn't seem like everybody else, my thought is he can do anything he puts his mind to.

Like his butterfly collection. He hasn't collected but a couple himself. He bought specimens so it wouldn't seem odd that he had the net. We go out maybe twice a week with his net. I carry the canvas suitcase and the bread.

Like the other day. At a deserted bend of walk in Prospect Park I scatter the bread in bits and open the canvas bag. Lowell waits with the net. Soon a pigeon lands and starts pecking at the bread. Then three, four. Soon there's a flock of maybe fifteen, all busy with the bread.

Lowell is fast. He swishes the net down over a pigeon on the edge of the circle. Scooping it up, he twists its neck and hands it backwards to me without looking, his eyes on the next target. I'm right behind

him with the bag and take the bird and begin the count. Lowell closes in on another pigeon, gets it, twists, hands it back. Now the flock is scared and flies off. But in a minute or two the birds are back at the bread and we go on with the netting.

After twelve pigeons are in the canvas bag, I strap it shut and say, "Full bag."

And none too soon, for a couple, their arms around each other's waist, are coming up the path. Lowell hoists the butterfly net over his shoulder and we leave the park, me carrying the bloated canvas bag.

Kramer's Deli is in a pretty beat-up neighborhood. I wouldn't want to go there after dark, but now in the late afternoon it gets a lot of traffic. In the window there's a spit going round and round with four small chickens barbecuing on it. The sauce smells delicious. Mr. Kramer notices us come in and nods toward the back. We go on through into a back room that's a storage for sacks of onions and cartons of breakfast cereal and cupcakes.

Turning to me, Lowell says, "We got twelve, right?"

I nod and open the bag as Mr. Kramer comes in.

Mr. Kramer shuts the door. He says, "Well, my little trappers, what have you got?"

"Twelve, Mr. Kramer." Low-

ell starts putting the pigeons one by one into an empty carton.

"I wouldn't do this if I didn't have to, but I'm going to adjust the price a little. Business isn't so good lately. Here's five bucks." Mr. Kramer holds out a five dollar bill.

Lowell straightens up abruptly. "Hey, that's no fair. We want six dollars, like always."

"No, boys, fifty cents a bird is too much. After all, I have to pluck and clean them. When I buy chickens from my wholesaler, I don't have that work. My time is valuable. So five it is."

Lowell doesn't answer, just repacks the pigeons in the bag and pulls the strap tight. "Come on, Danny."

I'd take the five bucks, but this is Lowell's operation so I follow him out. He walks sort of slow but Mr. Kramer doesn't call us back.

In front of the deli I venture, "Well, it's five bucks more than we have now. Besides who else will take them?"

Lowell just stares at the revolving spit, his eyes round, unblinking behind his thick glasses. Soon he turns to me and says, "You're right. Only I've got an idea what to do about it."

I pulled back to my letter. *Lowell's parents are never home*

so we spend a lot of time in his room where nobody disturbs us. He has an old dining room table that we use for a workbench. I am getting better at working with my hands. Dad says I have not broken many dishes lately.

I had been especially careful when I emptied the cereal from two boxes onto my mother's largest china platter. Luckily the one box was almost empty when I started. Carrying them to Lowell's apartment, I met him coming from the parking court. He had the gasoline in a coffee can. The other things we needed were all in Lowell's junk pile.

The idea Lowell got in front of Kramer's Deli had two tricky parts. One was when I held the Ping Pong ball and Lowell punctured it with the hypodermic needle and fed in the acid. But he was steady and didn't let any acid drop on my fingers when he withdrew the needle and taped over the hole. Slicing open another ball and filling one half with gasoline didn't give any problems, but taping the ball whole again was not easy. So that was the second hurdle. For each cereal box we made a set of three balls, one filled with acid and two with gasoline, kept together in a small plastic bag. Giggling like crazy, Lowell sealed the boxes

with transparent tape. They looked unopened.

"That's it," he said. "We're in business. As soon as the acid eats through the cellulose and mixes with the gasoline, *Bam!* we got a fire—starting all by itself in a cereal box."

This time Lowell lugged the pigeon bag while I carried the cereal boxes in a briefcase. A block away from Kramer's Deli we had to stop and get done laughing so we'd be acting right when we got there.

When we entered the deli, Mr. Kramer said something to his helper and they both laughed. Mr. Kramer held open the door to the back room and bowed as Lowell went by. There were two customers in the store and the helper was dishing up potato salad for one of them.

I wandered slowly down an aisle to the back shelf where the cereals were displayed. Kneeling, I made room at the back of two rows for our boxes. Then I whipped them out of the briefcase and onto the shelf. It took only seconds. As I got up, I noticed the paper napkins and

paper towels were stacked right next to the cereals.

When Lowell came out of the back room, I could see the canvas bag was empty.

"Ready?" he asked.

I nodded and we left. At the corner Lowell reached in his pocket and handed me two dollar bills and two quarters.

"I made him give me change," he said.

I shook my head at the money. "Keep it for Saturday."

Lowell put the money back in his pocket.

"When will it go off?"

Lowell shrugged. "I figure about three in the morning. Anyway he'll be closed so the fire will get a good start."

At my apartment house Lowell took the briefcase and said, "I was getting tired of the net, anyway."

I nodded agreement and went in to write this letter to my mother... Now I finished it up:

On Saturday Lowell is going to buy an archery set. I have put money toward it so I guess soon I will be using a bow and arrow. Get well soon. Your son, Danny.

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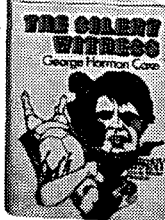
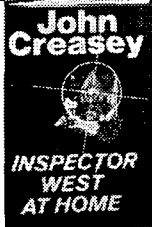
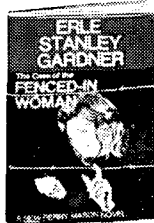
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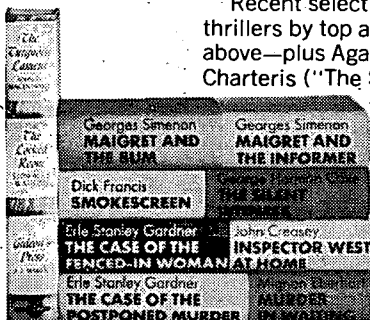
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